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# Narratives of Caring in the Elementary Art Room

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This dissertation, NARRATIVES OF CARING IN THE ELEMENTARY ART ROOM, by LAUREN CHRISTINE PHILLIPS, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all of the standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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## ABSTRACT

### NARRATIVES OF CARING IN THE ELEMENTARY ART ROOM

by

Lauren Christine Phillips

Caring is an essential part of any classroom environment, but most investigations about caring in schools do not include the voices of art educators. How art teachers perceive and model caring has not been addressed in previous literature. Looking through a theoretical lens shaped by Dewey, Vygotsky, and feminist theory, specifically an ethic of care, this study examined three elementary art teachers' caring practices and beliefs. Narrative analysis was used to find connections and points of departure in the participants' stories of caring in their classrooms with existing literature. By sharing art teachers' stories of caring, the findings from this study can add to previous understanding about how educators craft caring environments for their students.

NARRATIVES OF CARING IN THE ELEMENTARY ART ROOM  
by  
Lauren Christine Phillips

A Dissertation

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Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
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in  
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in  
the College of Education  
Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA  
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This study is dedicated to my wonderful participants, Yael, Eleanor, and Ghila. I would also like to acknowledge my caring and creative students, as well as the faculty and staff at both my current school and previous school. I would not have any amazing stories without them.

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## CHAPTER ONE

## A SHORT STORY ABOUT CARING IN THE ART ROOM



Figure 1. Origami cranes created by students to raise money for tsunami survivors

*During my first year teaching at my new school I felt lost. I missed my old students, who knew my expectations and often went beyond them. I liked my new students, but they still did not know all of my procedures, my lessons, my standards. Once they got to know me, I thought, they will learn to love me. I forgot it takes a while to learn to love someone, much less care about her art lessons.*

*One of my fifth grade students really liked to test me. Her name was Daniela and she often questioned things we did in art class: Why do I have to use this paint? Why can't we make this? Why can't I use this color? She often rolled her eyes when I explained my reasons. Despite her constant inquiries, I knew she liked art. She attended*

*my morning art club regularly. Once she got to know me, she might not love me, but she will respect me. I hoped.*

*I introduced a clay bowl lesson to Daniela's class in April. My new school was having its first Empty Bowls event in May and I needed my fifth graders to make the bowls we would sell to raise money for our local food bank. Over ninety-five percent of my students rely upon the free and reduced lunch program at school. Their families would benefit from our Empty Bowls event. My previous school has hosted Empty Bowls fundraisers since 2004. Once my new students learned about the importance of Empty Bowls, they would love it. I believed.*

*But I ran out of time. I had to rush through the history of Empty Bowls and why we were participating in it. Right before I passed out clay, Daniela raised her hand and asked, "What about Japan?" "What about Japan?" I replied, temporarily forgetting about the horrible tsunami that happened days before. "What are we doing to help Japan?" she asked. I paused. While I had personally made monetary donations, I hadn't asked my students how they wanted to help. "Can we make our bowls for Japan?" she suggested. Other students nodded in agreement. I praised my students for their kind thoughts, but reminded them that we already promised our bowls to the food bank. I'm not sure why I told them "we promised" when it was obvious that "I promised." I never asked my students if they wanted to make Empty Bowls, or how they felt about creating art to help others. I assumed their acquiescence from day one. Now, Daniela questioned why I should make the decisions about who we could help and I had no quick answers for her. Her question forced me to examine why I have promoted service-learning as an integral part of my art program, yet left my students out of the process.*

*We still made bowls for our local food bank, but we also began to brainstorm ways to help tsunami survivors. Eventually we decided to make origami cranes and sell them the same night as Empty Bowls. Origami cranes are not easy. Many students had great difficulty with the folds. Their first attempts were often ripped and disfigured. Yet, they worked together to figure out the steps. Students were helping other students to improve their folding skills. Other classes got involved and made cranes too. In the end, we raised fifty dollars. It was a small amount, but a significant gesture. My students were concerned about people they had never met and created art to help them. Even if they didn't learn to love me, they learned their art mattered and could show how much they cared. I was proud of them.*

*One of the great traditions at my current school is the fifth grade parade on the last day of school. Every year, the other grade levels sit in the hallways while the fifth grade students dance and march around the school. The teachers and younger students clap and cheer for the new "graduates." When Daniela saw me, she jumped out of line and gave me a big hug. I realized I had it backwards: My students didn't have to learn to love me. I just had to learn to listen to them.*

What value is this story? How can it become data to be analyzed and interpreted? How can we learn from our stories? When I started recording stories from my classroom, I noticed a common theme: Care. My stories often showed how my students and I care for each other, our environments, and our educations, through art. Looking through educational research, I can find studies about the impact of caring educators in schools (Alder, 2002; Carless, Ip, & Douglas, 2011; Cothran & Ennis, 2000; Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Holbrook, Moore, & Zoss, 2010; Irizarry & Raible, 2011; Roberts, 2010). Yet, I



could rarely find *stories* of caring, specifically stories of caring in art education. I know I am not the only teacher who tells stories about what happens in her classroom. Through this study, I hope to discover more stories of caring from art educators.

### **Why Care about Caring?**

I have taught at two schools. I spent eleven years at my previous school. This is my fourth year at my current school. Both schools are similar in many ways, with many students who speak English as a second language. There is high student mobility and poverty. These could be seen as deficits. I see them as gifts. My students are spirited, creative, and strong. We may not always understand each other, but we have a bond. I used to believe this type of caring relationship was unique to my prior school. Now, I feel that bond with my current students. The experience of changing schools has reinforced what I have felt since I began teaching: My students and I can learn how to care through the act of creating. We can learn how to care by manipulating media. We can learn how care by making something for someone else.

Yet, caring for students does not mean they will produce better artwork or remember every element and principle of design. Caring for students does not guarantee they will always have great behavior and consistently follow directions. Most teachers continue to care for their students, even when their students claim they do not care. The following section illustrates the nebulous nature of care and show how educators can from diverse situations nurture caring with their students. Caring involves more than folding paper birds for charity. Educators must seize upon opportunities to engage in thoughtful consideration about how our actions impact the world around us.

### **Different Perspectives on Caring**

It would be wonderful to have every lesson turn out like the origami cranes, but that is not always the case. Dewey (1999) believed, “Attention means caring for a thing, in the sense of both affection and of looking out for its welfare” (p. 185). If students attended to the materials in art class, I wouldn’t have to replace those materials so often. If students attended to each other, I wouldn’t have any behavior problems in class. If caring were only a matter of attention, then caring would be easy. As I have learned during my years of teaching, caring is rarely easy. It requires knowledge of context (the people and environment involved in caring actions), as well as adjustment to context, and then sometimes, readjustment.

Caring is an exercise in revision. Every day offers a new opportunity to care, just as it offers opportunities to harm, ignore, or destroy. What encourages caring behavior in one class may have no effect in another. Caring is a lesson in differentiation, a word I usually associate with academic instruction. Teachers are often told to differentiate their lessons for students to learn in multiple ways. Accordingly, all students need different kinds and levels of care. My goal is to create more days with expressions of care, rather than lectures about being more caring. But how do I get there? Where should I start?

Stout (1999) used an incident of animal cruelty as a catalyst to redefine her goals for her students’ educations. After one student kicked a stray animal and incited a fight, Stout reconfigured her lessons and class discussions on how the positive (or negative, in this case) actions of one person can impact the actions of others. She encouraged “the development of critical intelligence and the nurturance of the human capacity to care” in her students (p. 23). Students imagined how they could empathize with others and wrote

about ways they could care, not just for people, but for other living creatures and the environment as well. They looked at art from different cultures to stimulate imaginative ideas for their personal artwork. These activities caused a change in Stout's students. Instead of focusing on strictly on academic or artistic outcomes, Stout showed how discussions involving care could enrich and inspire students to see their educations not only about grades and tests, but also as opportunities to grow as human beings.

Stout used a negative incident as a catalyst for change in her classroom. My fifth grade student's persistent questioning about why we made Empty Bowls could have become a negative episode. I could have ignored her. Have other teachers been through similar situations? Have they changed their teaching as a result of caring for their students? This is a reason for my study. I wanted to learn how my fellow art teachers handle challenges and turn them into opportunities to expand caring. I wanted to learn why they are dedicated to teaching art and why they care about their students' artistic creations.

I also wondered about teachers' motivations for caring. After reading several articles and books about caring and teaching (Goldstein, 1998b; Holbrook et al., 2010; Noddings, 2005; Rabin, 2013; Ruggiero, 2005), Stout's (1999) narrative about the power of art to increase caring, as well as thinking about Daniela and the origami cranes, it seemed like caring teachers all had similar reasons for caring. Caring teachers are motivated to act in caring ways because they want the best for their students. Yet, every teacher's "best" intentions are different. Context plays a huge role in caring interactions with students, just as context plays a role in a teacher's reasons for caring.

James (2012) examined how teachers talked about caring, but their actions differed from their words. She constructed six teacher narratives from interviews and observations she conducted at a primary school outside of Washington D.C. Each participant (all women) spoke of caring in terms of mothering her students: providing assistance, showing affection, and giving advice about the future. Many students at this school came from cultural and economic circumstances very different from the middle class backgrounds of their teachers. While many teachers spoke of caring for students as individuals with different needs, James saw patterns in each teacher narrative that arrived at a different conclusion. All participants' beliefs on caring were based on their upbringings. Their relationships (or lack of relationship) with their mothers and their ideas about mothering had greater bearing on their caring actions than they acknowledged. One classroom teacher spoke of their students as "my babies" and insisted that she needed to "mother them" (p. 172). The principal of the school believed the teachers were like "mothers to these kids or at least second mothers because they're teaching them socialization skills, survival skills, and things that in many homes we take for granted but they don't have..." (p. 172). The art teacher had a tough upbringing where she had to become self-reliant at a young age. As a result, she felt she had to prepare her students to "have the power to control their own destiny" (p. 170). James found these teacher's origins stories had a greater impact than their daily interactions with their students.

Feminist writers, such as Noddings (1984) and Ruddick (1980), often described caring relationships in terms of mothers' care for their children. James (2012) noticed an interesting contrast in her research: The teachers she interviewed talked about caring in

terms of how they thought a “good” mother should act, yet did not really consider if their class or race influenced their beliefs about caring. The teachers assumed because their students came from poverty, they must be in need of greater moral guidance. Instead of assuming to know how to best care for students, James (2012) argued teachers should consider how context and culture mold caring, and practice humility and caution when caring for students. By looking at the origins of caring beliefs, as well as gaining a better understanding of students’ familial, cultural, and social backgrounds, teachers can focus less on what their students do not have and concentrate more on what students can do.

I am guilty of assuming deficits in my students’ lives. I’ve had several conversations with teachers at both of my schools where we lament how children don’t have the vocabulary, don’t have the support, don’t have the motivation to be successful in school. We often blame the educational system for valuing language skills over creative problem solving and divergent thinking. But we also throw blame at the parents, who haven’t “prepared” their children for the rigors of schooling. James (2012) cited several sources in care theory that do not address the needs of students who come from different cultural and economic backgrounds. As I stated earlier, much research in care theory discusses the positive role of mothering in care, not how it could hinder teachers in their caring relationships with students. This article suggested teachers should examine their beliefs about caring and question the origin of those beliefs. The narratives of these teachers powerfully show how little we listen to the students we claim to care so deeply about. As I realized in my interactions with Daniela, I thought I was listening to my students and teaching them how art can help others. Instead, I was imposing my vision of what caring should look like.

## **Constructions of Care: Building a Definition and Theoretical Framework**

In the following sections, I want to examine my beliefs about caring as James suggested. I will define caring in the context of my classroom and the theoretical framework that will guide my inquiries. I realize that my definition and framework might not match others' notions of caring in their classrooms. Yet, constructing a definition and theoretical framework will help me acknowledge my subjectivities and preconceptions about caring before starting the research process. While I cannot toss my thoughts and feelings about caring aside during my study, by acknowledging these ideas on care, I hope to be more open to the thoughts and feelings of others. Without a definition and framework, the "preconceived notions about knowledge and subjectivity as transparent, immediate, and unified are left unchallenged, and yet these preconceived, taken-for-granted notions undergird social practices and beliefs" (May, 1999, p. 25). It is with caution that I proceed on my quest for stories of caring.

### **Defining Care**

Care is a complicated thing. To come up with a definition of how I see caring in my classroom was not easy, nor does it feel settled. My personal definition of care is subject to constant revision. As the articles above illustrated, caring does not occur out of context. Caring in my classroom is socially constructed, built through relationships (Noddings, 2003). Caring is both practice and value (Held, 2006). Through dialogue, modeling, and practice, we encourage and confirm caring (Noddings, 2002). My students and I have dialogues about how we care for each other, as well as how we show care in our artwork. We model caring by bringing attention to students who show caring behaviors. We practice caring through our interactions daily.

Care requires increasing trust and reducing harm. Harmful words and actions are discouraged, but when they happen we talk about how we can avoid repeating destructive behaviors and imagine different ways of being. The process of becoming more caring in my art room is informed by aesthetic experiences, which can break “through the frames of presuppositions and conventions...to recapture the processes of our becoming” (Greene, 1995, p. 130). Imagination is not just a means to escape harsh realities, but also a way to reconfigure the accumulations of experiences that shape us (Vygotsky, 2004). The expansion of caring attitudes, through imagination, the creation of art, and our relationships with each other, is a central part of my pedagogy.

By modeling and practicing care, I try to foster and cultivate a love of learning in my students. I believe education is a process of nurturing, helping students to grow into productive citizens (Dewey, 1999). Through our practice of care, respectful interactions, and responsible behaviors, we can grow to value care and see how to apply it in other areas of our lives. By showing care of materials, my students show how they understand the shared nature of creating art. By showing care for the spaces we inhabit, my students show how their actions impact the environment. By showing care and craft in the production of art, my students show how they can create and understand through multiple forms of learning.

Caring is both thinking and feeling (Goldstein, 1998a). We think about how we show care to others and how the reciprocity of care (or lack of care) affects our beliefs about care. My students may not always reciprocate my caring actions, but that does not stop me from continuing to think of other ways to care for them. However, acknowledgement of my caring acts from my students is important. Actions are small

ways we can show care, but they are important. Care is strengthened and nurtured by feelings of attentiveness and thoughtfulness. It is both individual and interdependent on others. During my years of teaching art, I have tried to attend to both my students' personal and artistic needs and to provide a safe, creative environment for them to explore different artists and media. In the context of this study, I consider a teacher as caring if she pays attention to the needs of her students in a way that considers the context of the situation, maintains a safe environment, and encourages the artistic growth.

I realize these qualities may not form a technical definition of caring, but like Noddings (1984), I believe that “so much space had been given to the description of caring...because it cannot be completely constructed by rule or definition” (p. 107). The context of care impacts how I define it, but elements of attentiveness, safety, and growth are all part of caring interactions. Along with my definition, my theoretical framework has been under construction since the early stages of my graduate studies. By critically looking at my definition, as well as my framework, I hope to illustrate the tensions between words and actions. As James (2012) discovered, words of care may not match with practices of care.

### **Framing Care**

My definition comes from a theoretical framework based on feminist theory, specifically an ethic of care, Dewey's pragmatic beliefs on education, and Vygotsky's theories of social learning. Researchers often use metaphors when attempting to understand or explain what they are trying to do (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have used a “life is a story” metaphor to show how people construct narratives to give accounts of truth. In building my theoretical framework, I refer to the



metaphors of construction and home. These metaphors will reappear in my literature review and later in my methodology section when I discuss narratives. Home has many meanings, not only to feminists and educators, but also to anyone who has tried to build a research topic.

The foundation of my theoretical framework is an ethic of care, which comes out of feminist theory. While there is not a monolithic set of beliefs that go with feminism, there are some common beliefs, including the belief that women have suffered oppression in a patriarchal society. Because of this oppression, the experiences, values, and perspectives of women must be acknowledged, promoted, and celebrated as an alternative to traditional ways of knowing (Goldstein, 1997). Feminist theory strives for transformation: by offering an alternative to conventional histories and theories, feminists hope to transform society into something more equitable and just for all people. An ethic of care grew out of the feminist belief that traditional ethics did not account for women's experiences and moral beliefs. Along with Gilligan (1982), Noddings (1984) presented the ethic of care as an alternative to traditional ideals of morality and ethics. Together, these two scholars "epitomized the challenge of 20<sup>th</sup> century feminism to modernism's principle-based models of moral theory" (Preissle, 2007, p. 516). Noddings has stated an ethic of care "is feminine in the deep classical sense—rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness" (p. 2). Through relationship, not superior moral position, we navigate through ethical issues and dilemmas; "Rather than seeing moral problems as conflicts of rights to be solved by ranking values, moral problems are seen as embedded in contextual framework of others" (Davion, 1993, p. 161). The ethic of care is not a perfect system for every moral quandary (Beasley & Bacchi, 2005; Beauboeuf-Lafontant,

2002; Davion, 1993; Patterson, Gordon, & Groves Price, 2008; Thompson, 2003), but it offers me the most suitable system for addressing the needs of my students.

By looking at the ethic of care, I want to go beyond a shallow examination of superficial acts and feelings about caring in the classroom, to examine how curriculum, environment, routine, and culture affect the promotion of caring behaviors and attitudes. Because the foundation of any structure is critical, I will discuss the ethic of care in greater detail in the review of the literature.

From an ethic of care, I turn to Dewey's pragmatist beliefs about education. If the ethic of care is the foundation of my theoretical framework, then Dewey provides the structure. I could issue proclamations about how much I care about my students, but if I do not provide a relevant art education that incorporates their experiences and curiosities, I would hardly be a caring teacher. Dewey (1943, 1999) believed education should build meaning out of a rich learning environment, be relevant to the life of the child, and informed by the surrounding environment. Truly caring teachers acknowledge that students construct learning in different ways. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) described John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy as an extraordinary development in schooling:

Dewey's ontology is not transcendental, it is transactional. The epistemological implications of this view are nothing short of revolutionary. It implies that the regulative ideal for inquiry is not to generate an exclusively faithful representation of a reality independent of the knower. The regulative ideal for inquiry is to generate a new relation between a human being and her environment (p. 39).

Inquiry is not a process dictated by teachers. It is a process built by students and teachers together. Dewey's description of social construction of knowledge also recognized the possibility for transformation, which I connect to the power of imagination. Resistances can be reconfigured when imagination is released (Greene, 1995). Through imagination,

we have a tool we can use to form communities and learn from each other, as well as care for each other. A new connection to the world can happen because the knower is not a static entity, but part of an active relationship with the subject matter, constructing meaning in a social environment. The art class can be a place for the kind of inquiry Dewey believed should happen in schools (Eisner, 2002).

Most people do not try to build houses alone. A general contractor is needed to make sure the house is assembled properly. An electrician is required for wiring. A plumber makes sure all of the pipes are connected. Then, there are the painters, interior designers, roofers, and carpenters, among the others involved in a home's construction. Could a similar observation be made about learning? Vygotsky's (1986) theories of development highlighted the importance of culture and context. The social nature of learning was his greatest contribution to studies of cognition. His multifaceted theories addressed how individual and social processes develop together, influenced by culture and language (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Even imagination is affected by experience with the world (Vygotsky, 2004; Whitehead, 2004). No facet of learning, whether we are learning to draw or learning the importance of working with others, is untouched by social forces. Like a house, we are constructed.

Like Dewey, Vygotsky (1978) saw learning as socially created, not artificially contrived, but built with guidance from teachers. In my classroom, I see the social dynamic of learning, not only when my students are creating art, but also in their conversations about what they learn from the arts. We could not have made paper cranes if my students did not interact with each other and make connections to what they had previously learned (origami) to what happened in Japan. Art can be created without the

interaction of others, but it cannot exist without some imprint from the society in which it was produced. An understanding of caring was socially constructed throughout this art project.

To Vygotsky, “the significance of children’s art works does not lie in the emphasis on ‘product-oriented art’, but [on] ‘process-oriented art’” (Lim, 2004, p. 483). The process of creating art is impacted by influences within the art room, such as fellow students and teachers, and influences beyond the art room, such as artists, cultures, and languages, both verbal and visual. The combination of these diverse forces can manifest in amazingly varied and imaginative responses.

Both Dewey (1934) and Vygotsky (1971) acknowledged the struggle of creating art. The process of making art, the difficulty of thinking in terms of qualities and connecting that knowledge to language in order to communicate to others, *is* work. This work requires imagination and seeking something, which may not be immediately visible. I would argue caring requires an imaginative connection, supported by our social interactions with one another. I will discuss the connections to Dewey’s and Vygotsky’s theories of learning during the analysis and discussion of my data in chapter four.

The foundation is the most important part of the house. Without it, a house cannot stand. Feminist theory, more specifically, the ethic of care is the foundation for my theoretical framework. From this starting point, I build the structure of my house, supported by the works of Dewey and Vygotsky on the social nature of learning. This structure will support my research, as I examine how elementary art teachers see caring in their classrooms. These teachers may help me to think of new metaphors and think about different ways to value and practice caring in art.

### **Studying Care**

The purpose of my study was to examine elementary art teachers' narratives of care. I individually interviewed three elementary art teachers, at three different points over two school years, to discover how they perceived caring in their classroom. In my study, I address the following research questions:

1. In what ways do art teachers' narratives illustrate the nature of care in their classrooms?
2. In what ways do art teachers' narratives help them to define care in their classrooms?
3. What are art teachers' personal definitions of caring?
4. In what ways does the creation and appreciation of art contribute to a caring atmosphere? If art does not contribute to a caring atmosphere, how does the art teacher explain that?

After transcribing the interviews, I employed narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 1993, 2008) to discover and construct stories. Through these stories, I found new insights, not necessarily answers. Caring comes in many forms. By using different forms of narrative analysis, such as thematic, structural, dialogic/performance, and visual, I can gain a richer description of the different ways caring is valued and practiced in elementary art rooms.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A PERSONAL HISTORY OF CARING

*In elementary school, I was a shy student who rarely spoke unless my teacher asked me a question. One day my second grade teacher, Mrs. Mansell, lost her voice. I was busy with morning work and did not notice when she wrote instructions on the board. The other students around me excitedly told me to look to the front of the room. My teacher wanted me to relay her instructions to the other students. I remember Mrs. Mansell whispering directions and then I would tell everyone what she said. I was a teacher for a day! Instead of being a shy child who had difficulty speaking to other people, I gave out instructions confidently. I helped other students with their assignments. I even told some boys who were making fun of me for being a teacher's pet to get back to work. I was transformed, albeit temporarily. Mrs. Mansell regained her voice and I went back to being a shy, serious student who rarely spoke. Yet, my teacher's caring act of allowing me to 'teach' the class, showed me that I could be something bigger than myself. It made a lasting impact.*

When I was younger, caring was pretty easy to define. Caring people, like Mrs. Mansell, were nice. They smiled. They helped students learn new things. They gave their students opportunities to excel. I realize this is a great simplification of a complex issue, which is why I want to study art teachers' narratives. I want to go beyond outward signs and symbols of caring to see if there are similarities to how we, as art teachers, value and practice caring with our students.

Another goal of my research is to share art teachers' stories of care with a wider audience. Through these stories, I want to learn more than caring examples in art rooms.

I want to learn why an art teacher loves her job and her students, what inspires her to keep teaching and creating art, as well as how other experiences shape what happens within her classroom. Did they have teachers like Mrs. Mansell, who encouraged and believed in them? I am not expecting every teacher to reveal transformative experiences. Not every teacher taught class for a day in second grade, nor do I expect teachers to discuss theories behind their caring practices. Yet, there is literature that supports my personal beliefs about the importance of caring. As the foundation of my theoretical framework, the ethic of care guides my teaching.

### **The Ethic of Care**

Many writers have contributed to the development of care ethics. The ethic of care was developed in response to traditional ethics, which privileged the experiences of men in the public sphere over the experiences of women in private (Held, 2006; Noddings, 1984; Smeyers, 1999). Developing from a feminine point of view, the ethic of care borrows themes from women's worlds, such as mothering, family, and home. As the ethic of care has been debated, positions have been clarified and other voices have been added. The ethic of care has many implications for teaching, since education has traditionally been (and continues to be) women's work. Educating the young involves caring for the young (Goldstein & Lake, 2000).

The following section highlights the work of major contributors to the ethic of care. After looking at the ethic of care, I will turn to studies of caring in schools. Some of these studies cite the ethic of care, while others make more general statements of caring. Most of these studies are qualitative in nature, but they use a variety of methods to examine caring, such as interviews, observations, and surveys. I will also look at the

work of art teachers who use service-learning and community involvement to encourage caring actions by their students. By critically examining these studies, I want to show how the ethic of care may be applied to more situations, especially in art education.

### **The Origins of Care Ethics**

Many writers on the ethic of care start with Gilligan's work. Her book, *In a Different Voice*, was one of the first works to articulate a difference between masculine and feminine responses to ethical questions. Gilligan, a developmental psychologist, realized the study of moral development omitted the lived experiences of women. She wrote *In a Different Voice* to articulate a feminine ethical development. Criticizing Kohlberg's stages of moral judgment, Gilligan (1982) noted a contradiction in "the very traits that traditionally have defined the 'goodness' of women, their care for and sensitivity to the needs of others, are those that mark them as deficient in moral development" (p. 18). In Kohlberg's cognitive developmental theory of morality, all people moved along stages of ethical actions, with the highest stage reaching universal principles of justice (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). To Gilligan, moral behaviors do not exist in higher realms of logical consideration and abstract reasoning, or in abilities to separate emotion from thought. Instead, ethical decisions, especially those made by women, centered on relationships and context. Gilligan's research is an example of feminist scholarship, where personal connections and lived experiences play a significant role in how women construct their identities and make decisions (Goldstein, 1997). If one of feminism's goals is transformation from a male-dominated worldview to a framework where women's experiences are valued, then Gilligan's work is a major step towards inclusive and representative scholarship.



Gilligan referred to three studies in her book. Each investigation used interviews and narrative to support her claims about gender differences in ethical judgments. One study focused on college students who took a course on moral and political reasoning. The second looked at women's decision-making processes when considering an abortion. The third involved a wide variety of participants from all age groups and looked at themes of self and moral conflict. From these studies, Gilligan noticed differences between how men and women navigate through ethical dilemmas. Men tended to focus on equality and justice, while women tended to emphasize connection and relationship: "For both sexes the existence of two contexts for moral decision makes judgment by definition contextually relative and leads to a new understanding of responsibility and choice" (p. 166). Because of their experiences, cultural influences, and societal pressures, men and women approach problems from distinctive vantage points. Gilligan examined these vantage points to construct an ethic of care. Instead of everyone being treated equally, we should strive for doing no harm. Instead of rights, we should ask for responsibility.

We become aware of conflict through the context of our experiences. While a contextual way of resolving conflict by showing care is a possible solution to the impersonal and arbitrary applications of justice, context is not the only factor in caring. As other writers have noted, the ethic of care involves many considerations and must be continually nurtured.

### **The Impact of Home and Family on Our Perceptions of Care**

Along with Gilligan, Noddings is one of the mothers of the ethic of care. I emphasize the term "mother" because both Gilligan and Noddings have described the

ethic of care as rooted in feminine ideals and experiences (Gilligan, 1995; Noddings, 2002, 2003; Sander-Staudt, 2006). Although being a mother is just one role that could be part of a woman's experience, maternal thinking does not belong exclusively to women with children. Noddings (2003) has clarified how maternal roles relate to care:

[The] approach through law and principal, is not, I suggest, the approach of the mother. It is the approach of the detached one, of the father. The view to be expressed here is a feminine view. This does not imply that all women will accept it or that men will reject it; indeed, there is no reason why men should not embrace it. It is feminine in the deep classical sense—rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness. (p. 8)

Ruddick (1980) has also called for bringing maternal practices to the public arena. The idea of how the life of the home could impact society is the subject of Noddings' *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy* (2002). In this book, Noddings has taken many of the ideas of her earlier writings on caring and connected those ideas to domestic life and educational policy. This approach reverses most philosophical approaches that see the home as a miniature replication of the state, where the laws and values practiced by society are reproduced within the family. Instead, the family can inform the state on how to treat its members.

Family members are the first teachers and home is the first school. Parents give love and nourishment before infants can speak. In the home, children and adults work together to maintain and nurture, not only each other, but also the physical space and objects within it. Maintenance is one of the many meanings of care. Caring for others, as well as for place, is a way to maintain memories, interests, and desires. Duty and commitment are fortified in the home.

Noddings (2002) has been careful to note that not all homes are caring places. The drudgery of housekeeping has traditionally been characterized by the unpaid and

underappreciated labor of women. And what of children who are homeless? Noddings acknowledged criticisms with this possible solution:

It is the task, obviously, of the larger society to change the reality, the basic living conditions, of poor people, but it is the job of schooling to provide hope, to nurture talent, and to construct a place in which children can learn to see places as they might be. At its best, schooling might even provide a place to love and objects to cherish. (p. 167)

Dewey (1999), Eisner (1994), and Greene (1988) all have spoken to the need for education to transcend harsh realities and expand the possibilities for a better life, which strengthens our democracy. The place that has offered hope and nurtured talent for most people has been traditionally been the home.

How does Noddings (2002) propose schools should mirror the best homes? First, good homes are safe homes, providing spaces for exploration and education that are free from harm. Coercion is rarely used or needed. Everyday activities, like cooking and play, are opportunities to learn and grow. Adults communicate and listen to children instead of dictating knowledge. Aesthetic and ethical judgments should not be imposed, but rather debated and seen in new light. As Dewey (1934) noted, the “intrinsic qualities of things come out with startling vigor and freshness just because conventional associations are removed” (p. 99). Moving beyond conventions, whether in art or ethical deliberations, should be a goal of schooling. These goals cannot be achieved if teachers do not engage in meaningful conversations with their students.

Dialogue, modeling, practice and confirmation form a framework for a complete education. Participants in dialogue are engaged “in mutual exploration, a search for meaning” (Noddings, 2002, p. 287). Modeling confirms how actions can be more powerful than words: “Modeling may be more effective in the moral domain than in the

intellectual because its very authenticity is morally significant” (Noddings, 2002, p. 287). Practice is discussed as a guided process, helping students to discern what is important to know and what is frivolous. Finally, “confirming a person avoids shame and leads upwards toward a vision of a better self” (p. 289). These four aspects of education are found in good homes and good schools.

Noddings (2002) also saw schools as places where domestic issues traditionally ignored in public education, such as family planning and gender roles, can be addressed. Ideally, the school and home should support each other in nurturing children’s educational growth. Parents and teachers should work together to create caring environments for all young people. Noddings does not claim starting at home will solve all of the problems in education, but because good homes adopt an ethic of care, they can offer more compassionate solutions to societal problems. Many feminists feel the issues of the home and private life are discounted by traditional morality that regulated public behaviors. What if the ethic of care applied to those public arenas as well?

### **Expanding an Ethic of Care for Social Justice**

While Noddings (2002) focused the experiences of mothers and domestic life, Held (2006) expanded the ethic of care to reevaluate political and global issues. To Held, the ethic of care has implications not only in education and domestic policies, but also in economics and market conditions, as well as legal and political contexts. By comparing and contrasting the ethic of care to a universal ethics of justice, Held has shown the possibilities for societal transformation.

Unlike Noddings (2002), who has argued an ethic of care could replace justice as a superior moral concept, Held has stated both justice and care have places in ethical

discussions. Theories of justice and legal issues involve rights, neutrality, and fairness. Held (2006) noted these ideals of individual rights can discount the experiences of women, even when legal rights are promoted, such as protections for reproductive freedom and against sexual harassment. Women still face legal roadblocks and political inequalities. Market forces still favor profits and bottom lines over provisions for care. Held used an example of child custody to show how caring does not simplify difficult decisions. Is it best for a child to live with the person who has more income and can provide economic security? Or should the child stay with the person who can provide a more caring and trusting relationship? Even after one weighs the benefits and drawbacks of ethics of care versus ethics of justice, the answers are not always apparent.

Held proposed a solution where the ethic of care creates a larger framework for justice to work within. Held's argument is every human being depends on care when they are young, infirmed, and elderly. Most people would like to be cared for during other times of their lives as well. If we treated people with care in all aspects of society, from an individual level to the global level, we can balance the differences between justice and care ethics:

We can decide to treat such persons *as* individuals, to be the bearers of individual rights, for the sake of constructing just political and legal and other institutions. But we should not forget the reality and the morality this view obscures. Persons *are* relational and interdependent. We can and should value autonomy, but it must be developed and sustained within a framework of relations of trust. (Held, 2006, p. 72)

Justice can exist without care. A legal system that emphasizes punishment over rehabilitation is an example of this. We can provide for the basic rights of children without caring for them. An educational system that emphasizes assessment over

understanding is an example of this. What we need, according to Held, is a reimagined view of the relations between care and justice.

In search for a new metaphor for this relationship, Held rejected reductionism. We cannot reduce issues of care down to logical parts. Instead she suggested art, rather than analytical science, as a better metaphor. Indeed, “moral practice can certainly be thought of as an art...[that] seeks to create what is beautiful and ‘true’...[and] strives for artistic integrity” (p. 75). Great art has harmony in its parts. Art is informed and formed by the world around and can be adapted to diverse situations. Yet, in wanting to avoid reductionism, Held acknowledged other metaphors, narrative for instance, could also be applied to the ethic of care. Luke (1996) also suggested a different metaphor for care ethics, based on Foucault's (1986) writings on aesthetics. Thus, ethics could tie “knowledge with pedagogy in the care of the self and the politics of self- and social transformation” (p. 302). Imagine how different schools could be if we allowed for a pedagogy of care using art as a medium for change.

### **Caring in Schools**

How can an ethic of care apply to schooling? Noddings (2005) suggested reimagining the entire purpose of school. Instead of promoting college preparation as a goal for all students, she proposed multiple models based on the needs of the child, “organized around themes of care rather than the traditional disciplines” (p. 173). This connects with Dewey's (1999) beliefs about education as “a fostering, a nurturing, a cultivating, process” (p. 10). A school with fixed hierarchies and no connection to students' lives only encourages competition, shallow understanding, and no caring. What are some ways to make education more relevant and more caring? I have included some

studies of caring in general education, as well as art education, to show how an ethic of care can be applied in a school setting.

### **Caring in the Classroom**

Connection is found in relationships. Many studies of caring in the classroom talk about cultivating caring relationships, which can be difficult with all of the demands on students and teachers. Students are expected to follow directions, work hard, and walk in single, straight, and silent lines. Teachers are expected to prepare every student for academic success, so they can pass every test. The pressure to meet higher expectations with fewer resources creates enormous stress. Alder (2002) discussed this tension in her study of middle school students' perceptions of teacher care. Most of the students interviewed cited specific instances of care. For instance, caring teachers spent more time explaining assignments or called home to check on students. Many students also believed that teachers who yelled or belittled students were not caring. Yet, these students also acknowledged that teachers had to maintain discipline and encourage students to work hard. Instilling a strong work ethic was consistently mentioned as characteristic of caring teachers. Adler was troubled by a link between caring and control. Many students frequently spoke of how teachers had to show they were in charge, connecting caring with showing authority. Adler's solution to this is to encourage more communication between parents, teachers, and students on how to build caring relationships. These dialogues on care could spur further discussions on discipline, curriculum, and making education more relevant to the lives of students. Dialogue, as discussed earlier in Noddings' work, is an essential part of caring. Without dialogue, acts of caring are incomplete and may be misunderstood.

Vogt (2002) also described the tensions teachers felt when trying to create caring relationships with their students. She interviewed teachers in England and Switzerland, looking for difference in how male and female primary teachers showed care to their students. Many women talked about care in terms of commitment, but some mentioned physical acts, such as hugs, as part of a caring persona. Male teachers tended to frame care in maintaining a professional demeanor with students, built on respect. Yet, both genders saw responsibility and relatedness as key components of their relationships with students. Vogt questioned whether men and women perceive the ethic of care differently. While acts of caring may be different, both men and women saw caring as an essential aspect from their work.

### **Caring in Art Education**

Care in art education takes many forms. It can be realized in postmodern questionings of marginalization and power relationships in education. It can be seen in visual culture investigations as attempts for relevancy in the lives of young people. It can be found in aesthetics, beyond quests for beauty. It can be created through studio processes and cooperative learning (Heid, 2008). Care permeates what art teachers do on a daily basis. Teaching art in this manner allows students to foster “their creative seeing and thinking so that they can look at the world from multiple perspectives, breaking old routines and destructive habits and patterns of thought” (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2002, p. 18). One of the greatest things the arts can teach is freedom from prescribed ways of doing, learning, and being (Eisner, 2002, 2009; Greene, 1995).

Another strength of the arts is found in connection: “The concept of interaction is as fundamental in education as it is in all human states of affairs” (Eisner, 2009, p. 7).



One of the ways the arts can connect is through community collaboration and service-learning. Olivia Gude and Pamela Taylor are art educators who interact with their communities. Gude (2004) started the Spiral Workshop to help Chicago teenagers expand their artistic skills, as well as create opportunities to work with contemporary artists and examine community issues. Gude went beyond traditional approaches to media and art history, pushing her students to explore and create in new ways. The Spiral Workshop has been replicated in other communities. Many teachers love the workshop not only for what it taught students, but how it fostered a caring environment for both students and teachers to work together to create art.

Taylor (2002) encouraged her students to create art to help their communities. Both during her time as a high school art teacher and later when she became a professor, her students made clay bowls for Empty Bowls, an organization started by high school art students to raise money for food banks and charities that fight hunger. This is the same organization that inspired the Empty Bowls programs at both of my schools. Dr. Taylor was a professor at the university where I received a master's degree. Along with my major professor, she instilled in me the importance of giving, along with creating. Caring can be demonstrated not only in the creation of art, but also in creative acts of service to others.

Service-learning encourages connection to community, bridging a gap between the lives of students and their worlds in school (Taylor, Carpenter, Ballengee-Morris, & Sessions, 2006). The most significant part of Empty Bowls goes beyond the beauty of the bowls or the amounts of money raised. It is found in the educational component of Empty Bowls that questions how the richest country in the world has children who go

hungry everyday. Hunger, as well as poor nutrition, are problems some of my students face daily. We address these issues through our art, as well as connect to others who need assistance. I will always include service-learning in my art program (Phillips, 2004), but my more recent experiences have taught me the importance of allowing my students voice in shaping those service-learning projects (Phillips & Siegesmund, 2013). The research on caring in the classroom has also impacted how I see caring in my classroom.

### **Educational Research on Caring**

There are many explorations of caring in the classroom. These studies ranged from student surveys, to participant observations of classrooms, to interviews of teachers. Looking at all of these different methods has helped me shape my study of art teachers' narratives of caring.

#### **Surveys**

When looking at studies of caring in the classroom, I did not find many that used quantitative instruments to gather data. Tosolt (2010) used surveys, rather than interviews and observations, to measure how students saw caring behaviors. Fifty students from a private middle school participated in a two-part survey. The first part asked students to rate a range of caring behaviors. The second part asked students to rate how their teachers showed these caring behaviors. Tosolt reported African American students perceived caring when their teachers supported their academic needs. Caucasian students saw caring more through their interpersonal relationships with teachers. When broken down by gender, female students valued academic support, while male students appreciated interpersonal forms of caring.

Tosolt argued more quantitative research in caring was needed since current trends in educational research favored quantitative approaches. Yet, she seemed to have crafted a qualitative survey, even though she called her study quantitative. Her questions went beyond simple statements of caring to try to tease out some of the complexities involved with care. Context plays an important role in how students perceive caring in this survey: An important school goal was building strong relationships between staff and students. This school was small and had a stable student population. Teachers and students worked together for many years to build caring relationships. Tosolt did not disaggregate the data based on socioeconomic status, but she suggested this would be an area for further consideration. Since I work in a school with transient students, I would like to see more studies that consider how time spent together impacts caring between students.

### **Interviews and Participant Observations**

Most studies on caring rely upon interviews and participant observations, rather than surveys, to collect data. Ellerbrock and Kiefer (2010) interviewed and observed teachers and students at one high school to see how they created a caring community with a program called Freshman Focus. This program placed freshman into small learning communities with trained teachers who taught students academic and life skills to ease the transition to high school. Freshman Focus consisted of a specific class all freshmen took their first semester in high school, in addition to incentive programs and orientation seminars. Ellerbrock and Kiefer cited cognitive theories as their theoretical frames for their research, including self-determination theory and stage-environmental fit theory.

By citing psychological theories to support their research, the authors showed how small learning communities nurture caring in a developmentally appropriate way.

The authors focused their case study on one group of Freshman Focus participants and their teacher. The program was deemed successful because the teachers and students believed in the initiative. Teachers understood the developmental and social needs of their students and wanted to teach freshman. The students felt they were part of a supportive, caring community where they learned how to be successful in school. The authors acknowledged further study is needed, considering the limits of a single case study. Yet their findings, including teacher responsiveness to students and creating a specialized curriculum geared toward students' developmental needs, are in line with Noddings' (2005) suggestions for making schools more caring.

### **Case Study**

The use of case study to examine caring is seen in other investigations. Sheppard (2010) conducted an ethnographic case study of an undergraduate history class. The class focused on recent African history. She observed a majority of class sessions and interviewed both the professor and students in the class. According to Sheppard, the professor created a caring classroom environment by sharing her personal experiences in East Africa, allowing her students to connect their experiences to the history they were discussing. She also used multiple forms of media and crafted class projects to encourage group work between students. The professor wanted her students to be open to the complexity of learning history. She adjusted the course when students expressed concerns about class assignments and group work. Sheppard acknowledged that teaching with care is not without risks; some students resisted attempts to learn history in an

unconventional way. While the professor was not always successful getting her implicit goals of caring across to her students many students remarked how they learned more than dates and important events. They learned how to connect to the difficult history of a distant place and apply those lessons to their lives. Students also learned to be more open to working with others.

### **The Role of Context**

Context plays a role in most studies of caring. Caring in a real school is messy and never formulaic. What constitutes caring in one situation may not be enough in another. Bajaj (2009) discussed how context affects the quality of care, comparing a large public high school and a smaller private school. She used interviews, participant observation, and student written responses to study the differences in care between two schools in Zambia. Both schools had students who dealt with many hardships. The students who attended the public high school felt their teachers did not care about them. Most teachers seemed more interested in making money by tutoring after school instead teaching during school hours. Classes were large, unruly, and school officials did not offer advice on how to deal with the AIDS epidemic or how to improve one's economic situation. In contrast, the private school had policies that encouraged staff members to help students deal with social problems: frequent assemblies addressed relevant social issues, teachers received higher salaries and greater administrative support, and class sizes were smaller. Bajaj argued that context mattered when looking at care in schools. By comparing two schools with similar populations, her data showed that the private school seemed to be a more caring place than the public school.

Bajaj (2009) addressed how caring literature originally did not look at social context, diverse schools, or international settings. Through analysis of her data, she noticed themes of material conditions of caring, rather than a purely psychological perspectives of caring. Both schools dealt with major health and economic issues. Her data confirmed these themes: none of the interviews, observations, or written responses discussed caring without those material conditions. All participants believed teachers cared (or did not care) based on the context of their everyday lives.

Even though these investigations involved different methods and settings, all pointed to the difficult nature of documenting caring in schools. None of the research cited spoke definitively about one way to measure caring. One could use surveys, case study, or ethnography to investigate caring. The setting makes a difference as well. Tosolt (2010) looked at a private middle school, while Ellerbrock and Kiefer (2010) and Bajaj (2009) did their research at high schools. Sheppard (2010) examined caring in an university setting. The context of these places impacted the way caring was perceived. Perception plays a large role in how caring is both given and received. I could say I cared about my students and give numerous examples of how I perceived my actions as caring. But if my students do not see my actions as caring, how can I say what I do is caring? How can match my actions with my words?

### **Applying the Research to Practice**

I go back to Held's (2006) idea of caring as a practice and a value. To Held, caring practices create caring people. Caring relations involve trust. Building trust is an important aspect of care in my classroom. I cannot have a caring relationship with a student if she does not trust me. My students trust that I have good reasons for teaching

them about different media and artists. I trust my students to use materials safely and with care. I trust they will attempt their best effort on their artwork. We trust each other to act without cruelty. If harm occurs, my students trust we will address the problem, not with yelling and harsh language, but with care.

We need to value caring relations, as well as practice them. Like Noddings (2002), Held (2006) saw caring values within relationships, instead of within individual people. The values of care, as with the practices of care, can be far reaching or occur closer to home. The more we discuss and “clarify the values of care, [the better] we can better advocate their relevance for many practices from which they have been largely excluded” (p. 39). Perhaps this is needed more in my classroom. While we show through actions and words that we care about each other, my students and I rarely have conversations about how we practice and value care. Why should my students care about the art room and materials we use? Why should my students care about artwork of others? This goes back to Noddings’ (2002) suggestion for dialogue in the classroom. If we allow for more dialogues about care, will we create more caring people? I am continually surprised by how many times I react to a student’s negative behavior without having a discussion why that behavior occurred. Dialogue requires two parties who want to talk and listen. What should I do when students do not want to participate in that discussion?

Noddings (2003) has stated when the cared-for does not recognize caring, a caring relationship has not occurred. To her, reciprocity is part of caring, but is not symmetrical. The cared-for does not have to mirror what the one-caring does, but can just respond to the act of caring or continue to grow and be happy. I think this is an

acknowledgment by Noddings that caring for people, especially young children, requires time and patience on the part of the one-caring. Children may not reciprocate caring actions in ways we anticipate. There are times when I think I have cared for children, but they may not have felt my actions as caring, such as when I disciplined them in class. However, if I do not encourage dialogue with students, there is no way for me to know if they felt care from me. Yet, I am uneasy with the concept reciprocity and have chosen not to include it in my definition of caring. I am more receptive to the idea of mutuality, where everyone works together to grow caring relationships, but acknowledges all participants should approach those relationships with humility, caution, and self-awareness (James, 2012). Regardless, if educators value caring, educators must practice caring, create opportunities to talk about and model caring, and constantly reevaluate how to better care for their students.

### **Critics of the Ethic of Care**

While the ethic of care offers an alternative to how education could be, it is not a panacea. For instance, some critics have debated the validity of Gilligan's studies. Gilligan (1982) did not break down her abortion study by ethnic or socio-economic backgrounds. Her ethics sample came from a college class on moral development. Tronto (1987) suggested students enrolled in a college class might not represent minority or lower socioeconomic groups. She wondered if Gilligan's conclusions represented diverse populations. Most researchers and theorists who write about the ethic of care tend to be from privileged backgrounds. While many feminists denounce universal ethical theories that assume a woman's experiences are the same as a man's, the lack of



minority voices in ethic of care literature could be perceived as part of the mentality feminists have been fighting against.

There is a gap in the literature about how the experiences of African American, Latino, and other groups (as well as social classes) inform the ethic of care (Choi, 2008; Garza, 2009; Matusov & Smith, 2007; Patterson et al., 2008; Roberts, 2009; Thompson, 2003). Tronto (1987) noted many minorities also scored lower on Kohlberg's scale of moral development. Instead of positioning the ethic of care as inherently of feminine theory, Tronto suggested social and economic factors could influence how one develops an ethical stance. The omission of social and economic factors is a large failure, considering the lived experiences of marginalized populations could add much understanding on how the ethic of care is applied (or denied). Like women, many minorities work in service fields that are typically low paying, but require great care, such as working with the elderly and children. By listening to these criticisms and encouraging diverse voices, the ethic of care can continue to develop as a strong alternative to prevailing views of morality.

Tronto (1993) critiqued the ethic of care, not only for the lack of minority voices, but also because Gilligan avoided the political implications of her conclusion. Despite its deficiencies, Tronto advocated the ethic of care as a viable moral framework, which could be integrated with traditional ethics of justice. This mirrors Held's stance on using the ethic of care to improve the ethic of justice, not replace it.

With such strong associations to the life of the home and mothering, is the ethic of care too feminine? Are men not capable of caring? Do all women need to be mothers to understand caring? Vogt (2002) was not the only researcher to question how the ethic of

care applies to men and women. Most scholars, including Noddings, have stressed how everyone has capacity for caring and can act with care. Many writers have noted no one could survive infancy without care from another human being. Gilligan (1995) in her later writings clarified that there is a difference between a feminine ethic of care and a feminist ethic of care, with the former associated with obligation and selflessness, while the latter originates with connection and critique of patriarchal systems of justice.

Context and social order have historically shaped the 'different' voices of women:

"Listening to women's voices therefore clarifies the ethics of care, not because care is essentially associated with woman, or part of woman's nature, but because women...have voiced relational realities that were otherwise unspoken or dismissed as inconsequential" (Smeyers, 1999, p. 237). A teacher does not have to be a woman, or a mother, to apply an ethic of care to his or her practice. But, as Goldstein (1998a) has reminded us, caring is more than warm hugs and gentle smiles. Caring requires a concerted effort and constant evaluation to meet the needs of students. Teachers are already required to do this hard work to help their students achieve academic success. I believe the work of caring is even more difficult, since there is no standardized test to determine if we have made progress in our caring attitudes and behaviors. The results are much more subtle and subjective, which is why a subtle and subjective method of investigation is required.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### INVESTIGATING CARE



Figure 2. Blue scissors

*I know you want blue scissors, but all I have are a red pair. You destroy other students' artwork, break supplies, and scream at me. I try to calm you, to reassure that next time you might get blue scissors. You don't believe me so I walk away. I am sorry.*

*I talk to your teachers, but they are at a loss to explain you. I ask others for advice. They offer me sympathy. I rearrange my plans in hopes that I can manage you and keep sharp things out of your hands. We use modeling clay the next day. I make sure there is a blue piece waiting for you. You are excited and I am happy. Until you jump on the table and grab another child's clay. After you get down, I ask what you are making. You tell me you are making a monster. I laugh. You are funny sometimes.*

*As we work, I try to help other students, but they don't have my attention as much as you do. We line up to leave and you grab a child by the neck. Are you trying to hug*

*him, but don't know how? I walk beside you. You punch the air on the way out of my room. At least you can't hurt air, I reason.*

*You can't come to school the next day because you are told not to come.*

*Apparently something happened in your classroom the day before. I am sad and relieved at the same time. But most of all, I am exhausted. I don't want to see you anymore. I'm sorry.*

I wrote this story during my first year at my current school. I had no idea how to teach this child. Every time I saw his class, my lesson planning involved strategies to lessen his outbursts, which sadly also meant ignoring most of the other students so I could manage him. My plans failed constantly. My frustration was evident when I arrived at an arts-based research class I was taking that semester. To compound on my failed plans to use scissors with my kindergarten class that day, I did not have a plan for my research project. My classmates and professor wisely advised me to write down the blue scissors story. Through that story, I let go of my anger towards my student. I realized I had to step back and reevaluate how I responded to him. I had not realized until I wrote down the scissors story that I was constantly reacting to my student's negative behavior. I rarely acknowledged the times he made positive contributions to art class. I let his disruptions dictate how I disciplined him, instead of being more proactive. I could have moved him to another place in the room with other students who worked well with him or I could have borrowed another pair of blue scissors. I could have made him my special helper (a trick that has helped with many of my students who needed extra attention and care). None of these interventions would have been hard. They only required a little more thought and preparation. I had to stop overreacting to his outbursts

and attempt to calmly address his needs and the needs of the other students in his class. Through that story, I began the process of finding a better way to care for all of my students, including the student who couldn't have blue scissors that day.

Since stories are so enlightening for me, I wondered if narrative has the same effect on other art teachers. Collecting stories has increased my knowledge and improved my pedagogy. I do not have objective data to back up my claim. Fortunately, narrative inquiry does not claim to be "an exact record of what happened nor is it a mirror of the world 'out there'." Our readings of data are themselves located in discourses (e.g., scientific, feminist, and therapeutic)" (Riessman, 1993, p. 64). My personal experience compels me to defend the narrative, not as a universal truth (just as an ethic of justice is not an universal ethic), but as a powerful form of knowledge. For my research on caring in the art classroom, I feel narrative inquiry will allow me to better 'hear' stories during interviews with other art teachers.

In the following sections, I look at narrative inquiry and show how I applied it to my research questions. I will investigate the ways elementary art teachers' narratives illuminate the nature of caring in their classrooms, as well as search out what influences caring in their classrooms. Witherell and Noddings (1991) saw narratives as meaningful ways to have dialogs about caring:

Stories and narrative, whether personal or fictional, provide meaning and belonging in our lives. They attach us to others and to our own histories by providing a tapestry rich with threads of time, place, character, and even advice on what we might do with our lives. The story fabric offers us images, myths, and metaphors that are morally resonant and contribute both to our knowing and being known. (p. 1)

Using the metaphor of weaving a tapestry, Witherell and Noddings (1991) illustrated the power of stories as significant and valuable ways of knowing. To return to my metaphor

of building a house, my stories finish my home. They are like furniture, rugs, and artwork. I rearrange them, combine them in new groups, and sometimes I replace them with ‘better’ versions. By rearranging my stories, I see them in a new light. When I combine stories, I gain a new perspective. Some of my stories have been repeated so often that I have lost their original meanings. When I am no longer certain how a story fits with my other teaching narratives, I replace it with a new story.

This may appear deceptive: Why would anyone believe my stories if I change them? Researchers who use narrative inquiry must deal with issues of validity, but this is true for all methodologies. Criteria for validity in narrative can be compared to criteria for evaluating art (Riessman, 1993). Great art has unity, as do great stories. Great art has the power to connect and transform, as do great stories. Riessman went beyond art to look at the persuasiveness, correspondence, and coherence to judge the impact of a narrative. I would argue that great art has those three criteria as well.

### **What makes a Narrative (Inquiry)?**

However, before an evaluation takes place, this question must be answered: Is a narrative just a story? Connelly and Clandinin (1990) saw stories and narratives as part of history, culture, and the ways human beings experience the world. Riessman (2008) warned not to look for simple definitions with clear boundaries since narratives could include “stories told by research participants...interpretive accounts developed by investigator based on interviews and fieldwork observations...even the narrative a reader constructs after engaging with the participant’s and investigator’s narratives” (p. 6). Stories have plots to give meaning to events, but those events do not always have a linear temporality (Ezzy, 2002). Polkinghorne (1995) had reservations about using the word

*story* because it “carries a connotation of falsehood or misrepresentation” (p. 7). Yet, he concluded story and narrative were interchangeable, since most people understand story and narrative to be the same.

Stories form the foundation for narrative inquiry. To Clandinin and Rosiek (2007), “narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story...is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience” (p. 38). They connected narrative inquiry to Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy by uniting story with experience. Narratives are ways of knowing and experiencing the world. Every person who can communicate has told stories, not only about his or her personal experiences, but also fictional and fantastic accounts. Stories convey artifacts of cultural practices and knowledge (Cole, 2003). These are passed down through generations, evolving and molding to current practices. With this variation, narrative inquiry cannot start with variables to be tested, but stories to be told, questioned, and interpreted.

As Riessman (1993, 2008) alluded to earlier, stories are representations, not only between participant and investigator, but also involving the reader. All contributors bring different viewpoints and interpretive perspectives, which explains why different people have different reactions to the same story (Atkinson & Mitchell, 2010). Some readers may find my scissors story offers no resolution. Perhaps, I should have come up with a better solution to meet my kindergartener’s needs. I agree. Yet, to deny my feelings at the time would have not been truthful. Other teachers who have read my story appreciated my honesty and related their own stories. By sharing my story with other teachers, I received advice on how work with my student, instead of “managing” him. This was incredibly helpful for me and eventually helped my other students as well. I am

curious if other art teachers have had these moments where telling their stories to others has helped them become more caring teachers. The following sections show the power of narrative in the art room, as well as other places in school.

### **Narrative in Art Education**

Art educators have long recognized the power of narratives, not only in conveying the influences on artists or historical events, but also to share personal stories of connection within the arts: “The story becomes not just the experience of someone else, but our own experiences reflected through others” (Zander, 2007, p. 199). Many narratives in art are multidimensional. We can connect to the artwork itself, to the artist who created it, and to the cultural and historical ideas that influenced it. Through narrative, an art educator can relate information and review her teaching:

It is a text that (re)writes the implications of a particular curricular outcome[s] ...negotiating past practice and future pedagogy. Narrative methodologies offer the opportunity to (re)write prior texts—interfacing with and altering the shape of past practices—and thus adding to the continuum of alternative stories. (Rolling, 2010, p. 7)

This is the reason why I wrote the blue scissors story, as well as countless other narratives. These narratives have improved my practice and pedagogy, as well as shaped my perceptions about caring, because narrative allows me to reimagine, revise, and renew my practices to become a more caring art teacher.

Imagination plays a role in art education narratives. Through imagination, we create new worlds, artistic and storied. For this reason, among many others, research in art education is well suited for narrative inquiry. Storytelling is an art and art can tell a story. Imagination enriches both. Greene (1995) wrote, “our stories while different are nonetheless connected by the same need to make sense, to make meaning, to find a



direction” (p. 165). She has tirelessly promoted the arts as ways to make meaning and find connection, sparked by imaginative thought. Greene also found power in narratives to do the same. All educators, not just art teachers, can use narrative to imagine how they can better serve their students, stimulate connective ways of learning, and envision a better world. We can imagine better ways to care for each other.

### **Narratives of Care**

Art is not the only subject area in school where narratives impact relationships. Most research on caring in education uses qualitative methods of data collection, such as interviews and participant observations. Through these pieces of data, a narrative may be related, or constructed by researcher and participant. Goldstein (1998a) used narrative to illustrate how caring can form a basis for early childhood classroom. She chose a narrative format for her research because “narrative accounts of classroom life...capture the rich fullness of the experiences occurring there in a way that bonds the form of the telling to its meaning” (p. 252). By showing how one primary grades teacher, Martha George, related with her students, Goldstein illustrated many forms of caring.

Students were allowed to make choices to solve problems and created academic and personal goals. In addition, they were encouraged to be responsible in their actions. Even though Martha individualized how she related to each student, she also paid attention to how her students learned from each other collectively. Goldstein discussed how some of the students’ parents were unhappy about Martha’s methods. Some worried that she was not rigorous enough. Others thought she was too tough on their children. Martha balanced these concerns by providing a safe, caring, educationally stimulating environment where all of her students would show progress. Her measurements of

growth were not standardized (which was another area of concern with some parents) but based on the individual needs of her students. As Goldstein (1997) illustrated through Martha's story, a caring classroom is not free from problems. Children misbehaved and didn't attempt their best work at times. Some lessons were not effective. Yet, through attentive practices, routine, and love (a word Martha mentioned frequently), students grew in a caring environment.

### **Collecting Stories**

#### **Participants**

Narrative inquiry is the methodology guiding my study of caring in art classrooms. My method of data collection was interviewing. I interviewed three elementary art teachers from the Atlanta area: Yael, Eleanor, and Ghila. These teachers were selected using purposeful sampling, based on suggestions from fellow art teachers, art education professors, and members of an art education professional association. As Merriam (2009) noted, an average participant could give me an average response: Since I required teachers who believe caring is an important aspect of their classrooms, I wanted art teachers who were already known as caring art educators.

I started by sending the email invitation to art educators. I received four replies. Two replies were from teachers I knew and two were from teachers I had not met. Three taught in public schools and one taught in a private school. All were Caucasian. In the interest of looking for diverse candidates, I contacted one of my professors for suggestions on other potential candidates. She recommended an African-American art teacher who agreed to participate (Eleanor). I decided to move forward with the two teachers I did not know; one of them was Yael, who taught at a public school. I felt this

would help me be more “objective” about their stories. As I will discuss in the following chapters, I had trouble remaining impartial with my subjects. I grew to see them as friends who shared valuable information with me.

Due to time constraints, I did not observe any participant teaching, although I did visit their classrooms after their students left for the day. This could be considered a weakness in my data collection, because observations could corroborate (or clash) with the participant’s narratives. Yet, I was not looking for verifiable proof of care. Rather I am interested in how art teachers’ narratives shaped how they value and practice care in their classrooms. Therefore, multiple, in-depth interviews with open-ended questions was the best way for me to gain enough data to craft a larger narrative of caring practices in their classrooms.

### **Guidelines for Interviews**

I used the interviewing guidelines found in Roulston (2010). She believed, “if researchers consider the theoretical conceptions they have of interviewing and understand how interaction functions, they will be better prepared to elicit the kinds of data that will be useful for examining their research questions” (p. 105). I started with the same interview protocol for each participant and then I analyzed each interview before developing questions for the next interview. I was interested in their personal definitions of care, as well as stories of care in their educational histories. Since I interviewed art teachers, I also asked questions about how the creation of art impacts caring. Some of my participants never considered if art processes and media impact their caring actions with students before. This is another reason why narrative inquiry appeals to me, as the outcomes are not always predictable, since “stories told in research interviews are rarely

so clearly bounded, and locating them is often a complex interpretive process” (Riessman, 1993, p. 18). While Yael told entertaining stories, she had difficulty articulating her definition of caring. Eleanor was not the best storyteller, but she could express how her personal definition of caring connected to her philosophy of teaching.

Another interesting aspect of this study was I interviewed teachers at three different times during the school year. Most of the first interviews took place at the end of the previous school year, while the last two interviews occurred between the beginning and midpoint of the next school year. The interviewing process had to be flexible and reactive to situational aspects of teaching. This process reflects back to the ethic of care in my theoretical framework. All participants discussed the effects of time (and time of year) on caring in their classrooms. In fact, my participant from the private school dropped out of the study, since she had trouble finding time to complete the last two interviews. I replaced the private school teacher with a public school teacher. Ghila was highly recommended as a good candidate by several people. Because of time constraints, Ghila gave two interviews instead of three.

Despite my best efforts not to impose upon these teachers, scheduling the interviews was not easy. All of my participants have families. Some of them had health issues over the past year that needed to take priority. Ghila is currently in graduate school working on her certification. She was very empathetic about my research, understanding the work involved, since she was also taking classes and writing papers while teaching full-time. While I was sad to lose a participant, especially one in a private school, I was grateful to find a teacher who had interest in my research and wanted to help.

As I have learned from previous interviews, assuming to know what is important to the participants is an unwise strategy. Roulston (2010) suggested “one way to think about the feminist interview is that it is conducted in a way that is consonant with the theoretical assumptions associated with the strand of feminist theory underpinning the researcher’s work” (p. 28). To me, this means I must use an ethic of care in my interviews. A caring interviewer listens to her participants, checks for clarification, and asks for elaboration. A caring interviewer does not interrupt, substitute her beliefs for her participant’s views, or push a narrative in a different direction. An ethic of care should permeate every part of the research process. I cannot always say I followed these guidelines in all interviews. While I did not interrupt as often as I had in previous interviews, I still felt a need to tell stories to relate to their answers, which may have kept my subjects from fully explaining their responses. Fortunately, multiple interviews allowed me to go back and ask follow up questions I may have missed in the prior interviews. I constantly went over the transcripts to pick up on themes my participants wanted to talk about. While most themes connected with caring, some did not. While I did not follow up on themes that I believed were not important to my research, I did make time in each interview for each teacher to talk about what she felt was important to her teaching and her students. This helped me to see how caring materialized in their classrooms.

### **Timeline of Research and Data Collection**

Each art teacher was separately interviewed three times throughout 2013. Some interviews took place at coffee shops and others took place in their classrooms after school. Each interview lasted between fifty to seventy minutes. Yael and Eleanor taped

their first interviews in spring of 2013, while Ghila had her first interview in October, 2013. Yael's and Eleanor's second interviews took place between August and September 2013 and the last interviews for everyone took place between November and December 2013.

All interviews were recorded on an Olympus digital voice recorder. The audio recordings were transcribed with notes and sent back to each participant before her next interview. All transcripts and notes have been saved on a secure computer that only I could access. Any identifying characteristics of my participants' schools have been altered. Even though stories of caring may not seem controversial, confidentiality of all teachers is essential. I asked for more than one interview from each teacher, which is a significant time commitment. The least I could do was make them feel comfortable and free to tell their stories. Each teacher chose her own pseudonym, which fortunately for me, revealed more about her background and personality.

### **Interview Questions**

The following are the initial questions I asked each participant. These questions were starting points, for each interview spurred new inquiries into the fluid nature of caring in these art rooms. Many of these questions discussed background knowledge. I was curious if any participants had a moment during their educations, like the time I helped my second grade teacher, which encouraged them to go into education and become a caring teacher. I also wondered if certain media or artist has inspired the participants into love for teaching art. I know many art teachers who enjoy teaching certain artists or media because they loved those artists and media when they were becoming art educators. Besides each question, I have related back to the research

questions.

1. Why did you decide to become an art teacher? (Research question 1)
2. Can you recall a memory during your student teaching or preservice education classes that stands out as an important learning experience (either positive or negative)? Can you tell me about that experience? (Research questions 1, 3)
3. Who is your favorite artist or style of art? Why? (Research question 4)
4. What is your favorite medium (or media)? Why? (Research question 4)
5. What kind of art do you create (or used to create when you had more time)?  
(Research question 4)
6. What is the most enjoyable aspect of creating art? What is the most frustrating?  
(Research questions 1, 4)
7. What is the most enjoyable aspect of teaching art? What is the most frustrating?  
(Research questions 1, 2, 4)
8. Why do you teach elementary age children? Have you taught other age groups?  
What is your favorite age group to teach? Why? (Research question 1)
9. What is your favorite lesson to teach? Why? (Research question 1, 4)
10. How do you define caring? (Research question 3)
11. Why is caring important in your classroom? (Research questions 1, 2, 3)
12. Is caring explicitly taught or is it an implicit part of your teaching? Can you give  
an example of a time when you noticed moment where you thought caring actions  
occurred whether you intended them to or not? (Research questions 1, 2, 3, 4)
13. What factors contribute to caring in your classroom? (Research questions 1, 2, 3,  
4)

- a. Your lessons?
- b. The classroom environment? Routine?
- c. Classroom management? Procedures?
- d. Your students?
- e. Your teaching philosophy?

14. Can you tell me about a time a student (or students) showed caring in your art room? (Research questions 1, 2)

These questions were starting points toward narratives of caring. The histories of the participants, their favorite artists and lessons, and their classroom environments gave significant background to support the nature of caring in their classrooms. During the second and third interviews, I went back to the previous transcripts to further explore themes my participants thought were important. I asked if caring changes throughout out the school year. Did anything occur during the school year to change the participants' views on caring? Did an incident happen since the initial interview where the participants noticed caring actions? Is there a growth of caring? Could they measure caring in your classroom? It was interesting to see how the factors that affected caring behaviors and actions inside the classroom.

### **Researcher as Listener**

I know how powerful stories have been in my life. I wanted the participants to share the powerful effects of narratives in their lives as well. As an elementary art teacher and an active participant in art education associations at both the state and national level for many years, I have made many professional and personal connections with other art teachers. Many of teachers have already shared stories of creative acts of



caring with me, which illustrates the value of stories as ways to convey information about teaching styles and philosophies. My doctoral studies have introduced me to qualitative methods of research. Narrative inquiry is just one method that stresses “the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 10). My relationships with other art teachers, as well as my appreciation for the art of storytelling, could have constrained my interviews. As Preissle (2007) cautioned, “our identities are fluid and changeable, they nevertheless associate more with some in our communities rather than others” (p. 526). Considering issues of representation and relationships were critical to the success of my study. Awareness of assumptions about the subjects and subject matter had to be constantly reviewed. Just because I believe lower class sizes and inclusion of special education students makes my classroom more caring, does not mean those factors would make every art room more caring. While some of the participants agreed that smaller class sizes would help build more caring relationships in their classrooms, stories about the impact of special education students were not prevalent. The impact of standardized assessment was a much bigger factor on caring in art classes than I previously thought. By hearing to the participants’ concerns, temporarily putting aside suppositions about caring, and listening to their stories, I gained data that yielded a multi-layered analysis.

### **Narrative Analysis**

Once I gathered the interviews and transcribed, I engaged in the “complex interpretive process” that Riessman (2008) described. Since I have a theoretical framework based on a feminist ethic of care, I have a strong foundation to critically

examine the data. Many feminist researchers use narratives because “the implicit collaborative and interactive nature of the design is recognized for attending to the power disparities involved in research” (Johnson-Bailey, 2004, p. 124). Stories are ways to articulate and empower groups who been ignored or marginalized. However, my theoretical framework does not negate all power disparities between the participants and myself. To assume I am giving art teachers ‘voice’ to share their caring narratives is arrogant. My analysis and interpretation of the interviews reflect my theoretical stance, but not necessarily my participants’ realities. Borland (1991) addressed the inherent contradictions feminist researchers face:

On one hand, we seek to empower the woman we work with by revaluing their perspectives, their lives, and their art in a world that has systematically ignored or trivialized woman’s culture. On the other, we hold an explicitly political vision of the structural conditions that lead to particular social behaviors, a vision that our field collaborators, many of who do not consider themselves feminists, may not recognize as valid. (p. 64)

Not all art teachers feel oppressed, at least, not all of the time. While the support from administration and other teachers varied from school to school, most of my participants felt that they were a valued part of their schools. Before I began the interviews and analysis, I had to address my assumptions about what factors impact caring. This required listening to teachers as they tell *their* stories and look for significance within *their* words, something I struggled with in practice. During analysis, I have checked back with each teacher to make sure I have interpreted her stories in thoughtful ways. Some of the research questions looked at how the participants’ narratives illustrate the nature of care in their classrooms. I investigated this by asking all teachers for specifics and explanations from their stories of care. By conducting multiple interviews throughout the year, I used those details to construct a rich narrative that illustrates how stories of caring

could give a better understanding of the nature of caring.

### **Forms of Narrative Analysis**

Narrative analysis not only addresses concepts found in stories, but also “opens up the forms of telling about experience, not simply the content to which language refers. We ask, why was the story told *that way*” (Riessman, 1993, p. 2). Just as stories can be expressed in many ways, it can also be examined in many ways.

Riessman (2008) discussed four ways to analyze narratives: thematic, structural, dialogic/performance, and visual. Thematic analysis deals with the content of the narrative. Here, a researcher, guided by her theoretical perspective, can look for different themes present in the narrative. By using thematic analysis, I searched for reoccurring topics the participants reveal when talking about care. Are these themes tied to art, or to teaching philosophy, or to personal history, or perhaps to something unanticipated? Careful listening and follow up questions add richness to a thematic analysis.

Structural analysis looks at how a narrative is told. Themes are still significant in structural analysis, but how a narrator uses language to convey the story is just as relevant. How the narrative is arranged is also an important consideration. I wondered if all participants will tell stories of care, or will they simply respond to the questions in a straightforward manner? This was another reason for open-ended questions with follow up clarifications. The participants did not structure their stories in a linear way. Sometimes we would return to a story in another interview. Their responses go back and forth in time, pieced together from fragments to gain cohesiveness.

Dialogic/performance analysis looks at the interaction when telling as story. Narrator and audience construct meaning together through the performance or dialogue

that occurs during the narrative. Cultural and historical influences are apparent in this form of analysis. This was an interesting way to look at the participants' interviews. When asked for stories, some people put on a performance. They convey more than information: They draw the listener into another world, filled with characters and drama. Dialogic/performance analysis can arise between participant and investigator. Every teacher I spoke to was not necessarily a performer (except for one), but each interacted with me in different ways that can be explored through dialogic/performance analysis.

Finally, visual analysis relies upon photographs, film, and other visual forms of storytelling. An image can be interpreted thematically, as well as by its structure or how an audience relates with it. Art is a way to produce, convey, and interact with narrative. Since I asked all participants how art connected to their beliefs on care, I tried to have them think about how the processes and appreciation of arts could impact how they perceive and nurture caring with students. All teachers showed me both student artworks and personal artwork. I took photographs of their art rooms, which became valuable for the visual analysis part of my research.

### **Continuing the Journey**

Even though I interviewed three distinctive art teachers with different classrooms and points of view, some commonalities emerged, as well as the unique aspects of caring. I looked at the content, as well as the structure, of the interviews. I also considered the performance aspect of each participant's story. After the analysis, I asked each teacher to read the analysis of their personal interviews as a form of member checking (Merriam, 2009). A narrative is never truly the work of one person; cultural and historical influences shape narratives as much as the person telling the story. All of these forces

work upon our stories. As Clandinin (2013) found, “it is important to understand narrative inquiry spaces as spaces of belonging for both researchers and participants—spaces that are always marked by ethics and attitudes of openness, mutual vulnerability, reciprocity, and care” (p. 200). I am growing more aware of this as I attempt to understand my stories. Because of the importance of the ethic of care in my work, listening to the participants’ concerns and questions after analysis was as important as listening during the initial interviews. However, when analyzing the interviews altogether, that interpretation is my own. Due to the small sample size of three teachers and eight interviews, I felt multiple analyses helped me find commonalities, as well as points of departure from the narratives.

Did every teacher I interviewed see stories as powerful sources of knowledge? Did their stories really show the nature of caring in their classrooms? I believe narrative inquiry helped me gain understanding about the complexity of caring in art classrooms. In the future, it may help my participants discover more intricate connections of relationships in their classes. They may learn more about the nature of caring in the art room, which perhaps, is an illustration of how Dewey’s and Vygotsky’s writings on the social construction of knowledge could apply to the ethic of care. Vygotsky (1971) observed the process of making art as important as the art product. All of my participants discussed the importance of process in how they teach art. Demonstrating techniques, teaching about artists, and helping students improve their skills, are all significant ways my participants showed how they cared in their classrooms. McCormack (2000) noticed the process of moving from interview to narrative as complicated as making art: It is “a messy, frustrating, time-consuming journey...definitely not a linear sequence of events

easily represented in words on a page” (p.314). I could make the same reflection about writing this dissertation. Through the process, or construction, or journey (to name a few metaphors) of writing about care, I have struggled to articulate how stories from classrooms have helped me learn more about the nature of care, the social construction of learning, and how the creation and appreciation of art enhances both. I know the stories of other art teachers have enriched my understanding of a complex subject and helped me become a better teacher.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### STORIES OF CARE

*I was kind of the designated one in the classroom that would be the, you know, five people at the table, do the art stuff. So this one kid, who's name was David, drew a polar bear. It was ok. It was nice, you know, it was good. He said, "I'm going to give this to my daddy!" And I said, "That's wonderful! Let's make sure it gets into your book bag!" So it got into his book bag. Ok, so his daddy was in charge of marketing at Coca-Cola.*

*"No way!" I yelled, stopping her story. Was she really claiming credit for one of the greatest marketing campaigns of all time?*

*"Yes way! Yes way! Ok?"*

*"So are you indirectly responsible for the polar bears?"*

*"I am indirectly responsible for that whole campaign of the polar bears."*

*She continued with a straight face: Now, would this kid have just gone home if I had said,*

*"Oh cute, honey here." You know, and he goes home says, "Daddy, I drew a polar bear!" And daddy didn't see the polar bear. Would it still have been a polar bear campaign? Maybe. But it certainly, probably didn't hurt that David came home and handed his dad and said, "I think you could use this in your job at Coca-Cola!"*

*"I saved the polar bears! I did! I just know I did!"*

*Yael dramatically ended her story. I could not stop laughing. She was also laughing.*

*Maybe even she had trouble believing it. But she returned to the point of her story, "See, you never know what little tiny bit of caring will...how that will impact in this case, even if it was just like that long!" Yael snaps her fingers. "I could have saved a polar bear!"*

*she repeated. At this point, I was laughing so hard I was almost crying. I told her, "When you retire and you look back on your career highlights, you can tell people: I saved polar bears." Yael sat back and said with conviction:*

*"I saved polar bears."*

Yael gave me exactly what I wanted: A story that illustrates the power of a caring art teacher. All she had to do was praise a child for making a drawing and make sure the drawing was placed in his backpack. I love the grand implications of the story, how this simple act of attentiveness led to not only a great advertisement campaign, but also saved endangered animals! She was not even an art teacher yet. She was a paraprofessional, trying to figure out a way to go to college to become an art teacher. While I like to believe I have positively impacted my students, I have not saved polar bears. In fact, I have not saved any animals by caring for my students. But thanks to Yael, I now have a story, which shows that a person, paying attention and acknowledging creative acts, can have far-ranging impact on society.

I have no way of verifying Yael's story. I do not know if this child's father was a marketing executive for Coca-Cola, or if the drawing actually inspired the polar bear campaign, or even if the drawing actually existed. The Coca-Cola website mentions nothing about a little boy's polar bear drawing. In fact, it tells a more conventional story about an advertiser who, with the help of computer animation and his golden retriever, created a cute, realistic polar bear (Ryan, 2012). If only The Coca-Cola Company knew Yael's story! Ignoring my partiality towards a fellow art educator, isn't a story about a little boy's drawing better than some designer using his dog and his computer to draw a



polar bear? Wouldn't Coca-Cola be better served if it knew the polar bear marketing campaign really happened because of a caring paraprofessional?

The data from narratives are not like results from an experiment. My research cannot exactly replicate the lives of my participants, but I can, as a narrative researcher, “collect and tell stories about them, and write narratives of experience” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). This chapter will be divided into sections following Riessman's (2008) four types of analysis: Thematic, Structural, Dialogic/Performance, and Visual. Yet, to just jump in to analysis would not fit the form of a narrative. Narratives have elements of plot, settings, and protagonists (Polkinghorne, 1995), as well as actions and resolutions (Labov & Waletzky, 1967) and characters (Barone, 2001). I have previously discussed why I use narratives for my research. Now I would like to introduce the protagonists who will help me craft my stories.

### **Origins**

All of my participants became art educators after having other careers and raising their families. Two, Yael and Ghila, are Caucasian. Eleanor is African American. Yael responded to my email asking for participants for my research about caring in the art room. Eleanor and Ghila were recommended to me as potential participants to contact. Both Yael and Eleanor were interviewed three times over the course of eight months. Ghila was interviewed twice in a two-month span because she replaced another art teacher who dropped out of the study. All teach art at public elementary schools in the metro Atlanta area. All of their schools are IB schools, which means they are part of the International Baccalaureate program. At this time, I would like to focus on how each

woman found a career in art education. Each teacher has a story of how she became an art teacher and why she feels caring is an important part of what she does.

### **Yael**

Yael was one of the first teachers to contact me when I was searching for my research participants. She teaches at an elementary school located within a wealthy neighborhood, yet most students live in apartments complexes just beyond the neighborhood. The majority of her students are Hispanic. She has been teaching at this school for over a decade. Before she became an art teacher, she worked as a paraprofessional, mostly in special education classes, and taught art at a temple on Sundays. The story of how she became an art teacher could be summarized in one word: Persistence. Yael recognized this and returned to this theme throughout our interviews:

I had, in my misspent hippie youth, been very crafty and unfortunately when I was growing up, there was no art in school. I have sporadic memories of doing something nice and someone recognizing it. So, when I finally was able to, through [a] scholarship, actually go to State University and say, “Hi, I want to be an art teacher!” And have the person look at me like I was daft beyond belief because I was 41 and they were like, “Yeah, right.”

Despite being told by “everyone” that someone her age could not succeed in college, she graduated with honors in 2002. She talked of being a “capriquarian” even though she did not consider herself an “astrology person”. I realized during this conversation that Yael and I share a birthday. While I also do not take astrology seriously, I have found amusement reading my horoscope and resign myself to the realization that people born towards the middle of January are not known for being fun loving and easy-going. We are constantly at work, knowing that our persistence will pay off someday, or as Yael told me, we just have “this desire to persevere...this desire to say, you know, to say, Ok this is

my goal and to, you know, bloody your head on that wall until it falls, to do it. To actually do it.” Even her pseudonym, Yael, has a story of persistence behind it (Transcript 1).

Later, Yael told me that she chose her name when she converted to Judaism, because “usually you’re given [a name] at birth, but when you convert you have to pick your own. In Hebrew, Yael also means ‘mountain goat’ and a person who perseveres.” In telling her story of how she became an art teacher, Yael shared some traits with her biblical namesake. It is almost as if she was on a righteous quest herself, but instead of overcoming the enemy of the Israelites, she triumphed over those who doubted she could become an art teacher. Her stories of perseverance illustrated her intense desire to provide her students with the quality art education she wished she had as a child, so they could create and grow artistically in a caring environment.

#### Transcript 1

*Yael:* Ok, write down Y-A-E-L. That is pronounced Yah-L. There you go.

*Lauren:* What’s Yael?

*Y:* It’s my screen name.

*L:* Oh! Screen name (laughs), so that’s going to be your...gotcha!

*Y:* Yael is my Hebrew name and it’s the...

*L:* I love that!

*Y:* Well, she’s in the bible. Yael is in the *Book of Judges*.

*L:* *The Book of Judges*, ok.

*Y:* And Yael is considered a righteous gentile because she...the bad guy is coming across the desert to kill the Israelites and Yael lures him into her tent and gives him lots of alcohol. When he falls asleep, she takes tent peg and puts it through his forehead.

## Eleanor

It wasn't until the middle of our first interview that I realized Eleanor knew Yael. In fact, she completed part of her student teaching in Yael's classroom. Her children attended Yael's school. Now, Eleanor teaches at an elementary school a few miles away from Yael's school. Her school is one-third African American, one-third Caucasian, and one-third Hispanic. "It is a good mix," she told me, "I feel very comfortable [there]." She did not start out teaching at the elementary level. Her first year teaching was at a middle school, which is now closed. The experience, while short, was a positive one. Eleanor feels like she "learned, oh, a lot, like five years of experience with that one year at the middle school." In addition to the usual challenges of being a first-year teacher at a middle school, she had the task of teaching in a school with no art program for the previous five years:

It was great for my first year because the class sizes were intimate and so I really got a chance to kind of dig in and just enjoy the students and the projects. Now the only thing was, the dilemma during my first year was, that I found out that the previous art teacher passed away and they never hired another art teacher. It had been five years since that school had an art teacher... Basically I had to start from scratch. I had eight grade students that had not had art the entire time they attended that school, as well as seventh... So I had to start with the basics...

Yet, she really bonded with her middle school students. She even coached the cheerleading team, leading them to competition for the first time. However, Eleanor commented, "I wish I felt more connected. I felt like I was on an island my first year." Part of the reason for this was, due to an email error, she did not receive any communication from her fine arts coordinator. When the error was discovered, Eleanor "made it a goal to make sure I was abreast of whatever knowledge, you know, is put out there." She took these valuable experiences from her middle school experience—

growing a close relationship with students, making sure they had a strong foundation in art, and taking an active role in her system—and began a strong art program at her current school. Her current school’s neighborhood is gentrifying, with new, more expensive houses replacing older ones. Interestingly, her school has been renovated and relocated several times and the current building is less than ten years old. It has been an IB school for three years.

While Eleanor shares many similarities to Yael, she is quite different in many ways. Like Yael, Eleanor became an art teacher later in life. But, where Yael is a performer, Eleanor has a quieter demeanor. She did not face resistance when becoming an art teacher. She worked in various jobs, including dancing with a local art group that gave performances in schools. Originally wanting to become a child psychologist, Eleanor eventually decided to go into art education after talking to an art education professor:

[She] was the one that suggested that I think about getting a degree in art education, in the meantime, so I at least that I could have work experience. You know, and then have an income. So that’s what I decided to do and I did not regret the decision at all. Like I said, I have always enjoyed working with children. Had always felt like I was an advocate in some way.

Eleanor is a very hard working teacher, who believes she can make a difference in the lives of children by being an advocate for their art educations. She begins planning her curriculum during the summer. Her art lessons center around a new theme each school year and culminate in a school-wide art show, the Night of the Arts, each February. Her art shows are not just ways for her students to display their artworks: These shows make connections to the school’s IB program, as well as extend cultural and community connections. This year, Eleanor is coordinating an art exchange with students at another

IB elementary school in a neighboring district that will also include performances during the Night of the Arts. Eleanor impressed me with her faith and dedication to make sure her students have the best art education possible. Eleanor chose her pseudonym to honor her mother. She did not tell me much about her childhood or her family, but I could feel her connection to them through her stories of connection to her students and her school. This feeling of connection is something Eleanor tries to pass along to her students through her curriculum.

### **Ghila**

Ghila entered my research later than the other two participants. She enthusiastically volunteered after another art teacher dropped out of the study. She began her career in graphic design, spending “seven years in the Netherlands, many of which I was in school, a Dutch arts school, which was phenomenal.” When Ghila’s children went to elementary school, she began to volunteer there. Since she was active in many of the school’s activities and had a fine arts background, she was asked if she was interested in substitute teaching by the school’s art teacher, who was going on leave:

[She] was going away for a week back to South America for a visit and she asked me if I would be interested in taking her classes. And I said yes I would try and that week was a wonderful experience! I actually had my students draw their shoes. The art teacher that was teaching at the school did not have a strong background in drawing, so she mainly did pottery and weaving with them, which was nice, but they had not had any drawing lessons. It was very exciting for the rest of the teachers at the school to see that those kids were so talented. The shoes were wonderful and that was a great start! So then, the teacher came back and finished the year, but she was moving and I interviewed for the job. Back then, art at our school was not supported by the district, so the parents paid for the art program.

Ghila came into an exceptional situation in that she had a fine arts background, but no education experience, other than her week of substitute teaching. She was not supported

by a school district, but by funding provided by parents. The shoe drawing project could be seen a metaphor for her teaching career: Ghila hit the ground running. Teaching third, fourth, and fifth grade, she worked from a cart moving from classroom to classroom, learning from not only other art teachers in her district, but from classroom teachers in her school. Over a decade later, she has a large art room, an assistant four days a week, and artwork hanging in nearly every hallway. Her art program is an integral part of her school.

Ghila's school is currently undergoing renovation, so her school is temporarily located in a nearby middle school that was previously vacant. The original location is near a major research university and hospital and has a large number of students with international backgrounds from "about 54 different countries." Ghila's school has the most affluent student population out of the three schools I studied. Interestingly, all three schools have foundations that support various programs and activities, but Ghila's school foundation is the only one that actually pays the salaries of teachers and assistants. In addition to an art assistant, the science teacher at her school is funded by the foundation. Her school district now funds her position, which means she has to get her teaching certificate. She is taking courses at two local universities after school to fulfill certification requirements.

It almost seems silly to ask someone with her experience to go back to college to get a piece of paper that says she can teach. Yet, Ghila feels "through my experience, I have a sense of where I am and where I want to go and so I'm trying to use the benefits of certification to enhance that as much as I can." Another positive aspect of going through certification is Ghila can share her teaching experiences with pre-service teachers,

including her belief in the power of stories. Ghila is the only participant who discussed her use of stories to teach her students. She has a collection of stuffed animals from all over the world, collected during her many travels. Ghila uses the animals as characters to discuss character traits with her students, such as persistence, cooperation, and courage. One animal that appears in her stories frequently is an okapi named “Oko.” I had no idea what an okapi was, but I soon learned more (Transcript 2).

Oko is an essential part of Ghila’s classroom. I will return to the importance of storytelling in her classroom later in this chapter. Like Yael and Eleanor, Ghila chose a name with personal significance for her pseudonym. Ghila means “joy” in Hebrew. She receives great joy from teaching art to her students and showing them how caring and creating go hand in hand.

#### Transcript 2

*Lauren:* Is that a real animal?

*Ghila:* Yes, it’s a real animal and I have many versions of the animal here. They’re Originally from the Congo. That’s the only place in the world where they live.

*L:* So are they part zebra, part...

*G:* They’re part zebra, part giraffe, and they’re part horse.

*L:* They’re part giraffe? Oh I love this (pointing to the costume the okapi is wearing).

*G:* This is because they came over from the Congo, so they have on their native costumes.

*L:* Oh that’s so great! So these are your mascots!

*G:* These are, but this one is the real mascot. It’s dressed up for Halloween now. But this is Oko. The kids are absolutely crazy about Oko because he’s always getting in trouble. He’s very mischievous, so I tell these stories about him and through the stories, I always have a reason for it and it’s usually caring: being nice, being kind, being...he’s always getting in trouble for not following rules.

*L:* So it’s kind of like fables, like you’re trying to...

*G:* Yeah, just little snippets of stories here and there. And some are just silly. And it serves a purpose that I can teach them about character development, but I can also get them to clean up. ‘Cause I say: If you don’t clean up in time, we’re not going to visit with Oko. So, he’s dressed up for Halloween.



### **Themes of Care**

The wonderful thing about interviews is there are so many ways to analyze them. I am using Riessman's (2008) four approaches to analyzing narratives for this data, but I worry about my “role in the inquiry” and I am afraid I will “lose sight of the various fine lines that one treads in writing of a narrative” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 10). How do I know if I am interpreting this data in a thoughtful way, that I have not lost sight of what my participants wanted to tell? Like Barone (2001), I try to balance between speaking “in an analytical voice” and wanting to “honor the stories of participants before transforming them” (p. 171). ‘Transforming’ may not be the best word, for what I want to do is explore the themes I find significant to my study of caring. I cannot possibly cover every theme in the eight interviews I conducted, but the themes I chose will connect to the purpose of my study and my research questions.

### **The Many Meanings of Spirituality**

All three participants discussed caring as an ingrained part of their lives, yet all spoke of caring in different ways. Each teacher talked about caring in her classrooms in general terms, like Yael, who believes caring “is just something you do.” To Eleanor, “caring means a lot of different things.” Ghila, in her stories of Oko and other animals, thought “in terms of caring, you can reach kids if you tell them stories.” All elaborated on these initial thoughts about caring through examples, stories, and visuals. Through these stories, I see a spiritual thread, which surprised me at first. When I speak of spirituality, I do not necessarily mean a religious belief, although each participant, especially Eleanor, made references to her personal faith at different times. Interestingly, both Yael and Ghila chose Hebrew names for their pseudonyms. In the

context of my study, I define spiritual as meaning a principled belief, whether it's a belief in the importance of what art teachers do or a belief in the need for caring in education. While Eleanor, Yael, and Ghila described caring in their classrooms in pedagogical and practical terms, the reference to something transcendent in caring for students deeply appealed to me.

Ghila did not make references to a spiritual reason for teaching art, but she has a deep connection to her school. When I asked Ghila if being an art teacher has made her a more caring person, she explained how learning on the job shaped her beliefs about caring in her classroom. Ghila worked as a graphic designer before becoming a teacher. She “got tired of being at the computer and dealing with the business world.” While she has a great deal of artistic knowledge, it was not giving her joy in her previous profession. When she decided to become a teacher, she found a higher purpose for sharing her talents. Teaching, Ghila remarked, encourages caring behaviors:

Well, you know, you learn so much about children and all of the issues they have. And you know you, some of them—you're just kind of shocked by—but others you feel like you can help them. It makes you want to help them. I just think being around children in a teaching environment and other teachers, you know, there must be another reason we do this (laughs). There's an underlying caring thread that runs through all of us and I think that connects...I've learned a lot from other teachers and that's kind of interesting: not having an education background, not having any textbook experiences to relate to...other teachers have shared a lot with me and that's been great.

Ghila would have struggled more without the help of other teachers. Since she came from a fine art, rather than an education background, her learning curve was much higher. The classroom teachers at her school taught her about classroom management. Art teachers from her district helped her with lesson development. Just because a foundation supported her salary didn't mean Ghila had unlimited resources. The teachers around

Ghila cared about her and her program so she could become a great art teacher. The caring thread Ghila spoke of was not a superficial connection. It built a support for her.

The social nature of Ghila's beginnings as an art teacher brings Vygotsky's theories of learning to mind. While Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) research dealt with how children develop and learn in social and cultural contexts, Holzman (2009) applied Vygotsky's ideas to the workplace, noting "organizations are structurally and functionally designed to relate to social units" (p. 101). Vygotsky conducted his research in schools, but he did not focus on teacher development. Holzman's research looked at how adults learn through performance, which she connected to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. In these performances, adults in different types of organizations were taught improvisation to foster creativity and team building: "In doing performance, they discover not only how to do what they do not know how to do, but also *that they can do it*" (p. 97). I would argue Ghila learned by performance, improvising her way to becoming an art teacher. During her first years of teaching, she did "a lot of reading, a lot of studying, reading a lot journals, talking to a lot of other teachers." While teaching art from a cart, she attempted papier-mâché using flour and water before learning that art paste made a nicer final product (without attracting bugs). She taught clay lessons from a cart as well, finding shelves in the media center to store the students' works. The entire time, she learned from other art teachers and from the classroom teachers at her school how she could craft better lessons, improve her classroom management, and build her program. She learned by teaching and gained concrete, professional knowledge from practice (Clandinin, 1986). From reading over the transcripts of our interviews, I sensed Ghila cared about her students and her art program in part because the teachers at her

school and the art teachers in her district cared about her. She remarked, “I’ve just been so appreciated here. You know, it’s just becomes your community. They care about you, so you care about them.” With the support of compassionate colleagues, Ghila learned how to build an art program with a caring thread. She found a profession that lifted her spirit and gave her purpose.

Eleanor referred to herself as “a spiritual person” in our conversations. Her faith is a driving force behind her motivation to help her students become better artists. Field trips to museums, grants for school programs, art exchanges with other schools, and interactive art shows are just a few examples of what she does for her students. This is an incomplete summary of her work. Eleanor also helped to write assessments for her district. She taught with a group of district teachers at a Saturday art school based on Gude's (2004) Spiral Workshop for elementary through high school students. Even though health issues and family obligations demanded her attention, Eleanor continued to work. How did she juggle all of these duties? Why did she work so hard? Faith is part of her answer:

I just believe that it...that’s just part of my being. Anything that I do, but I know I wouldn’t be able to do it without our Father and...I mean, I wouldn’t have existence without Him, so it’s very much a part of me and whatever my endeavor is, but I know He’s carried me through. [Becoming a teacher] was a goal of mine and He brought me here and I pray on a daily basis...I don’t act without that spiritual connection.

While her religious faith provided a foundation, Eleanor’s work is also driven by her belief in her work as an art teacher, a belief that what she does matters, not only to her students, but also to the other teachers in her school, her community, and her fellow art teachers. I asked her why she was involved with so many activities both within and outside of her school. She replied, “I’m not just thinking about myself, I’m thinking

about all of the teachers and staff, everyone that has to come and serve our children. That's going to help foster a caring environment for everyone." When discussing why creating art encourages caring relationships, Eleanor spoke of art as an essential part of learning, "a vehicle, in which you can express yourself and it's just so easy for students, no matter what the age, to just open up." She continued, "Art is a connection to life—it just makes it so much easier for them to be interested in so many things, no matter what you present to them." When a teacher believes what she is teaching is more than just skills and techniques, that art can foster relationships to all learning; she believes she is teaching something of great value. She is teaching for a higher purpose. As Greene (1995) eloquently stated, "We who are teachers would have to accommodate ourselves to lives as clerks or functionaries if we did not have in mind a quest for a better state of things for those we teach and for the world we share" (p. 1). Teachers who strive beyond functionary learning, who are passionate about what they do, are moving towards what Dewey (1999) thought the best teachers should do: It is not our job to replicate society, but to improve it for future generations.

Why do I connect with this spiritual intensity about teaching art and fostering caring relationships? Is it because of the marginalization our profession endures? Through the constant restraints put upon us—more standardized tests, less support, larger classes, to name a few difficulties—art teachers continue to care about what we teach, why we teach, and who we teach. Yael affirmed this belief repeatedly when discussing the need for caring educators: "You need to be encouraging and loving and positive, because you just don't know the influence—that little seed—that helps them feel that they are successful human beings." She returned to the need for encouragement, noting

that the art room may be, for many students, “the only place to feel successful,” where “if they really put in the effort, then their art should be complemented and should be empowered.” The idea of empowerment connects to Greene’s (1995) belief in the arts as tools for transformation, for the arts, taught in a caring, nurturing environment, “can radiate to inform the ‘conversation’ and empower individuals to open themselves to what they are making in common” (p. 59). What higher goal can art teachers have than to empower their students to transform the world?

Dewey (1934) also spoke the arts as transformative acts. He noted that an aesthetic experience produced by an interaction with arts can be “a celebration of the life of a civilization, a means of promoting its development, and is also the ultimate judgment upon the quality of a civilization” (p. 339). Dewey also discussed the importance of the social aspect of this experience. If art is created in a cold, uncaring environment, empowerment is not possible. While I am certain not every art teacher strives for a spiritual realm when she teaches a lesson—some things, like learning how to cut and glue paper, are not quite earth-changing events—there is always the possibility for planting that little seed. With a nurturing environment, that seed can grow and thrive. As Unrath & Kerridge (2009) reflected, “Integral to the teaching of art is recognition of art’s primal worth in the sense that it can empower” (p. 280). Great art teachers strive for this higher purpose and encourage their students to do the same.

### **A Sense of Place (and Threats to It)**

In addition to having a higher purpose for teaching art and caring about their students, all three teachers had a sense of community, both inside and outside of their schools. As I mentioned previously, through hard work and the support of other teachers,

Ghila built a successful art program, to the point where she could reflect, “I’m spoiled, but I am working harder because of it.” Being located in a former middle school while her elementary school is being renovated might not inspire community, but Ghila made her art room and hallways into museum exhibits, where every class represented a different artist or theme. Every student had his or her work on the walls, which was important to Ghila. It made the hallways and other community spaces truly a shared place for elementary children. Through her art displays, she created community in a temporary space, something appreciated by her faculty and staff.

Eleanor’s passion for her school community manifested itself in many ways, from using community as a theme in her big art shows to supporting the IB program at her school. She discussed how she prepared for her art shows during our first interview (Transcript 3). Her school-wide art show is not only a way to document the work she has done with her students, but as a way to learn about the community.

## Transcript 3

*Eleanor:* I work from a theme. I create a theme and decide what the lessons will be based on the theme. For example, my first year it was the Harlem Renaissance. And then I started thinking, well in order for my students to really know who they are, they should know about their community. Then my second year, I titled my theme: “We are the town called Highland” (her school’s name). I was trying to get them to take an ownership on their community and some of them I know technically, may live outside the district. I still wanted them to take ownership their school, because that’s their community.

*Lauren:* Yeah!

*E:* And to know that. So I started researching over the summer about the history of [my school] and that was so exciting to me! It really made me develop more of interest in the school and my [students’] parents. I had the students create a writing piece...I wanted them to interview their parents and try to find out how long they had been part of the community. Who their parents were...and it took on a different...it took my lessons to a different level.

*L:* Did you just do this within your classes or did you have classroom teachers help you with this or was this something people saw what you were doing and it kind of grew from there?

*E:* I love collaborative teaching and I think that that’s important. I remember hearing about collaborative teaching and one of the things that I saw when I guess when I started teaching...I just assumed that that was something that was really happening. And then, I saw that it happened to a certain extent. I really, really think that students can benefit from collaborative teaching, so that’s always a goal for me....[My school] is an IB school. So particularly with it being an IB school, I think it’s very important that collaboration happens. I put a great deal of effort into going to teachers and just meeting with grade levels and telling them, well, this is my plan, this is what I would like to happen, how can we make it happen? Basically trying to make it all happen.

For a caring teacher like Eleanor, planning her lessons and preparing for an art show is not just part of her job. It is her way of making her art curriculum relevant to her students and connecting them with their community. Eleanor, more than my other participants, cited the IB program at her school as way to create community. At the beginning of this school year, she was a semi-finalist for a local education award. Had she won, Eleanor would have used part of the award to get her fifth grade “students to really understand IB attitudes and profiles, but in particular, tolerance and empathy” by funding field trips and art exchanges with students at a school with a more established IB program, which will



culminate in her Night of the Arts show at her school. Even though she did not get the award, Eleanor continued to work on alternative funding, from grants, to foundations, to crowdsourcing websites like Kickstarter to make the field trips possible. At the beginning of this school year, her fifth graders went to the elementary school with a great IB program and learned how the arts and cultures of other nationalities can enrich and nurture their lives. The goal of these excursions and art projects has been to help her fifth grade students internalize IB attitudes like tolerance and empathy, and create a larger community with a more experienced IB school through the connection of art. Eleanor, through all of her lesson planning and collaboration with other IB schools, wanted her students create art in a community, one that fostered not only caring attitudes about people, but also caring for cultures, histories, and places. Eleanor truly embodied the IB learner profiles by being caring, reflective, and open-minded in her pedagogy. She was also reflective about her teaching, constantly thinking of better ways for her students to positively impact the world around them.

As I stated earlier, all teachers involved in this study teach at International Baccalaureate schools. An IB school aspires to “develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect” (“IB mission and strategy,” n.d.). Depending on the school, the IB program had varying effects on the practice of each art teacher. Eleanor discussed the IB program more than the other candidates. She emphasized IB learner profiles and encouraged her students to be open-minded, reflective, and caring. All IB learners should also strive to be inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, risk-takers, and balanced (“The IB learner profile,” n.d.). She

went beyond encouraging IB attitudes in her classroom practice by volunteering to mentor fifth grade students complete their exhibitions. She explained her rationale for mentoring students: “I want them to feel the excitement. I want them to be empowered and that’s really important for me.” By taking steps to support her school’s curriculum framework, Eleanor expanded the IB learner profiles into powerful learning objectives for her students and illustrated how an art program can be a vital part of a school community.

Ghila and Yael did not feel as great a connection to the IB programs at their schools, but both acknowledged the great potential of IB attributes in their art programs. Ghila noted, “Students become more caring when they see relationships . . . not only between one another, but when the curriculum overlaps, they have the opportunity to make connections between cultures and why [people in] the cultures live the way they do.” The IB program has been one of many influences on her art curriculum: “Working in an IB school fosters more incentive to communicate with other teachers because there is [an expectation] to coordinate [art] lesson plans with the classroom curriculum. So yes, it does influence some of the lessons I teach.” The communication and collaboration the IB program expects among teachers is demanding. It has the possibility to encourage caring, if teachers want to collaborate and the administration fully supports teachers by providing time and resources for collaboration and training.

In this study, the stronger a school’s administration support IB principles and attitudes, the greater the sense of community developed between the art program and the regular classroom. I based this observation on how Eleanor, Yael, and Ghila portrayed the impact of IB on their art programs and how they described the general community

within their schools. Eleanor and Ghila had described the IB program in a positive light, especially Eleanor, who felt the IB program strengthened her art curriculum. She had learning profiles and IB attitudes posted prominently in her classroom and referred to them while teaching her lessons. Yael received some IB training years ago, but when I asked her if the IB program impacted her classroom, she replied, “No, but it should.” While she feels supported by her administration in most areas, there are just too many other factors that have taken priority over strengthening the IB program and encouraging community between classroom and support teachers. Her school, like Ghila and Eleanor’s schools, had local and state standards to implement and assess, in addition to the IB curriculum. While the IB program focuses on “development of the whole child as an inquirer, both in the classroom and in the world outside,” it does not have the power over the education of students quite like the state standards do (“IB primary years programme,” n.d.). Local and state assessments often have a greater impact on the schools’ communities more than the lofty aspirations of the IB program

All three participants have standardized art assessments that they must administer to certain grade levels. Since there is little guidance from the state’s department of education, each district has developed (and in some cases, redeveloped) its own assessments. Some district art assessments are multiple-choice, some are short answer, and some are performance tasks where students have to create an artwork to be assessed. All tests take time away from students making original art. Yael described on fifth grade test where students had to draw an oil pastel portrait, using one set of complementary colors, “with five degrees of tints and shades.” There were more criteria, including making the portrait demonstrate emotions and show proper facial proportions. Students

also had to write about the portraits. Yet the most frustrating part for Yael was the tests were never returned to the students, so students would spend weeks working on their portraits and never see them again. While I appreciated an art test that is not a multiple-choice assessment, it seems like this assessment, with all of its criteria, stripped the creativity out of making art.

If there is one negative theme that ran through my participants' observations, it is the unintended consequences of assessment, especially on a subject as subjective as art. Eisner (2002) wrote about the need for assessment in the arts, noting that "to abandon assessment and evaluation in education, regardless of the field, is to relinquish professional responsibility for one's work" (p. 178). None of the teachers I interviewed said assessments in the arts should be eliminated. They all desired assessment that was consistent and fair, or at least had "a little bit more of a cohesive direction," as Yael stated. She also remarked she often felt as if she has "taken a metaphoric shot gun, shot at the wall, and then go and circle the concepts," when she attempted to teach lessons that emphasized tested standards. Every teacher I spoke with voiced frustration with the lack of direction that accompanied district assessments.

A consequence of misguided assessment is harm to school's community. Along with classroom teachers, who have dealt with the pressures of standardized testing for years, now art teachers are feeling more strain. "It's hard to care when you're just trying to survive," said Yael. She made this remark when describing how classroom teachers rarely had time to talk to her when dropping off their students. They had meetings to rush to, or paperwork to fill out, or just needed to "put their heads down on their desks."

It is difficult to build a community when everyone in a school feels too stressed to support each other.

Yet Eleanor, Ghila, and Yael all found ways to expand the concept of community in their art programs, showing how caring can be nurtured in tough situations. Both Yael and Eleanor participated in a district-sponsored Saturday art school program based on Olivia Gude's (2004) Spiral Workshop. In the Spiral Workshop, students created works inspired by contemporary art, their own interests, and the community where they lived. Taking place in a nearby high school, this extra-curricular program allowed elementary and middle school students to work in small groups with several teachers. It was in the Spiral Workshop where both Eleanor and Yael found a community of teachers. To Eleanor, "It was really exciting. We called ourselves 'The Spiral Saturday Group'." Yael agreed: "It was a way I realized I could connect with other art teachers and stay in the loop." She continued, "It was wonderful to see [the students] kind of blossom from the caring that they got with...six teachers hovering over them." Not only did this program give students a caring community in which to create, it gave the art teachers a support group.

Funding did not materialize for their Spiral Saturday group for this school year, which upset both Yael and Eleanor. The program was successful: more students wanted to take part in the art workshops and more parents wanted to support it. What also saddened Eleanor and Yael was loss of their community of art teachers, who passionately believed in the benefits of Spiral Saturday workshops. Yet, they all continued to email each other. Some Spiral teachers have continued to meet with each other and advocate to their new fine arts coordinator to find money for the program. Even when community is

disrupted, it will not disappear if the members continue to care about their relationships with each other.

### **More than Field Trips and Story Time: Curriculum and Pedagogy as Functions of Caring**

While cultivating community both within school and outside of it, each teacher worked to create a community with her students. Each had unique ways of creating her art room community, yet all felt the importance of students learning and creating art in a safe, inviting space. Part of caring for others within that space is demonstrated by creating compelling lessons with high student engagement. Part of caring is delivering art content in a way that is informative and memorable. In this section, I will focus on common practices that encouraged caring in the classrooms of all teachers, specifically how curriculum and pedagogy fostered care. How each teacher approached caring in her classroom varied: There was no artist, media, or skill that all teachers thought could encourage caring behaviors in her students. Eleanor and Ghila both planned out their curriculums in great detail, while Yael focused more on how she taught her lessons. Using humor and dramatic performance are important ways Yael teaches art, while storytelling is an indispensable part of Ghila's classroom. Field trips were another way all teachers cared for students. As the following paragraphs show, multiple factors impact creating art and caring attitudes.

Curriculum and pedagogy played large roles in how these art teachers practiced caring in their classrooms. All three women have attended summer institutes at local museums to help them plan for the next school year. Eleanor really enjoyed these learning experiences because of the “approaches that you can use in the classroom and

then also to the art that they'll be presented to, just learning ahead of time. That gives me time over the summer to try to figure out how I can plug this into my lessons." Eleanor often remarked she "just liked to plan for things." With a school-wide art show in February, assessments at the beginning and end of the school year, and field trips and art exchanges to coordinate; planning is essential to Eleanor's success. Her curriculum is guided by these factors and is coordinated into a theme the summer before. This year's big theme is "Take a Walk in my Shoes." Her students study a wide variety of artists, but many projects will feature shoes. Her kindergarten students learned about *Pete the Cat*, a popular picture book written by Eric Litwin. The entire story focuses on Pete's many colorful shoes. The fifth graders will paint on shoes for their exchange with students from another IB school, focusing on the IB profiles of tolerance and empathy. By creating a theme to center her lessons around, Eleanor can teach a variety of artists and media, engaging all of her students in meaningful explorations with art, while connecting to her school community's IB beliefs.

An important part of teaching art for Yael, Ghila, and Eleanor is incorporating field trips into their curriculums and pedagogy. The value in using field trips to enrich student knowledge and engage in different learning activities is well-documented (Coughlin, 2010; Falk & Dierking, 1992; Nabors, Edwards, & Murray, 2009; Pace & Tesi, 2004). All three teachers believe that "[as] a teaching pedagogy, field trips are lived learning" and valuable ways to connect students to art (Coughlin, 2010, p. 200). Each year Yael applied for a grant that paid for every child in her school to go to the nearby art museum. Yael did not go on the field trips very often, since she would have missed too much instructional time and could not get a substitute teacher. The classroom teachers at

her school took the students, even though many of them complained to Yael about collecting permission forms. But that did not stop her from preparing her students for their trip. I asked her why she worked so hard to make sure her students could go a field trip when she rarely got to go:

Well, it goes back to caring. It does. It goes back to caring...nobody's going to take them...I can remember showing them something by Benito Archuleta. He's the one that does that 3-D cat...He's sort of a folk artist...And I show them one of his works, and [the students] are like, "We've seen one of them!" I mean, just kind of, you know...that connection of art...If you show anything from Archuleta and the kids laugh, it's because "chuleta" means "pork chop" [in Spanish]. You can kind of make it a real joke!

Yael's student population is mostly Hispanic, so part of the reason she emphasized his work was to connect with her students' culture. She gave me a sample performance of how she introduces Archuleta to the children: "All right now, I don't want you to laugh! Don't you laugh at this man's name! Because I know you are going to laugh!" Yael even changed her voice to a high-pitched tone; she was almost singing. She finished her lesson to me emphasizing the importance of "just that kind of goofiness" and instructed me to "emphasize the 'chuleta' because it means 'pork chop' and they just laugh, but they don't forget!" These humorous performances are teaching tools, helping her students remember artists and terms. Yael has also not forgotten the importance of humor and joy when working with children. Eisner (2002) believed, "the arts, when experienced in the fullness of our emotional life, are about becoming alive" (p. 84). By connecting students to artworks through humor and performance, Yael is helping her students discover the joyfulness in creating art.

Sending her entire school to a museum for free every year involves a large amount of planning and work, but Yael wanted to give her students an experience with



art that they will hopefully carry with them as they grow. Yael frequently referred back to the lack of art in her childhood and how she longed to find an outlet for her creativity. There were no art museums, nor did she have a teacher who spoke in silly voices to help her remember an artist's name. Her ritual of sending the entire school to the art museum allowed her to rewrite her history into a positive experience for her students.

Yael was not the only teacher to send her students on art-filled trips. Both Eleanor and Ghila took their students on field trips to different art museums. For Eleanor, field trips were another way to be “an advocate...especially if you're a Title One school that your students really need that type of experience being outside the classroom to really grasp what you're trying to teach them and then the connections are made.” She received the same grant as Yael to send her upper grades students to see a Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera exhibit. Like Yael, Eleanor emphasized artists who shared a culture connection with her students. These learning experiences “allow student to become involved in the world around them. They gain exposure to new and exciting places and at the same time reinforce the knowledge they have gained in the classroom” (Pace & Tesi, 2004, p. 37). By making field trips a part of their classes, these art teachers showed great care in finding funding, preparing students, and providing opportunities for deeper understanding of the cultural, social, and personal reasons artists create. As Falk and Dierking (1992) pointed out, a well-planned museum visit can a “socially mediated form of learning” where students can physically interact with the artwork and each other, taking prior knowledge and engaging in dialogue to learn more (p. 109). Falk and Dierking thought the field trip was an excellent example of Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development, “an essential feature of learning,” which “awakens a variety of

internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers” (p. 90). Looking at art reproductions is a suitable way to learn about art, but it does not compare to viewing the actual piece of art. To provide these experiences year after year, to connect students to artwork that is cultural relevant to their lives, is a caring act that does not end when the field trip is over. The grant Yael and Eleanor apply for each year also pays for all students and their families to return to museum at a future date for free.

Ghila also used museum collections to inspire her lessons. She has been teaching a “museum curriculum” for the past three years. She was so inspired by a summer institute featuring artworks from The Modern Museum of Art (MoMA) that she asked the local art museum for an art showcase, where students would create artworks in response to the MoMA artworks. Once the art museum accepted her request, she worked with teachers at other schools in her district to expand the opportunity for other students to have their work in a student art show at the museum. Twenty-five students displayed their art in the same building as works by Picasso and Warhol. Ever since, Ghila has connected her lessons to artworks found in museum collections. She also takes her third graders to another local art museum, where they can study works from ancient Egypt and Greece.

Since her initial museum experience, Ghila has been expanding her curriculum to incorporate more artists. Each class focused on a different artist, studying subject matter, style, and stories. She wanted her students to know, “Who was this person?” and that “artists don’t just sit in castles, you know, having a good time, they’re real people with real concerns. I think they like that. They feel better about who they’re studying if they,

you know, understand a little bit more about the person.” She referred to another lesson based on Marc Chagall’s paintings and she told her students, “Chagall grew up in the Holocaust and so we talked about the history behind the painting. I said, You need to have the respect for this project.” Stories are essential in Ghila’s classroom. She told a story of how George Rouault “really identified with the folks on the street” and used his work to advocate for the homeless. She remarked how Faith Ringgold’s story quilts “are great for [discussions on] caring.” But it is her Oko stories which appear over and over again. They are rituals that end her class and reinforce character traits, such as persistence and cooperation. They connect her personal experiences, such as stories from childhood, her travels to foreign lands, and her love of animals, to what her students are learning. The stories are also motivation for cleaning up at the end of class. Ghila has told her students, “We’re not going to visit with Oko,” if they did not clean up in a timely manner. This routine has helped her classroom management and conveyed necessary information in an entertaining format her students love.

### **Discipline and Attentiveness**

Ghila’s stories bring me to the idea of caring ways to manage discipline in the art room. Instead of nagging her students to clean at the end of art class, all Ghila has to do is remind them they won’t have time to visit with Oko if they cannot get cleaned up in time. The students also get an “open mic” with Oko where they can ask the okapi questions and come up story suggestions. Eleanor has a treasure box to reward good behavior. Yael talks to students quietly when she sees they are having difficulty with their artworks. She asks them if they “have thought about this? Have you turned it this way? Have you looked at it this way? What if? Just that sort of thing to just sort of

encourage them to think as out of the box as they can.” Discipline and classroom management are some of the hardest aspects of teaching in any subject. Yet, as Weinstein & Miganano (2007) believe, “caring and order are not irreconcilable goals. Indeed, the two go hand and hand” (p. 63). Clear structures, engaging lessons, and routines all work to encourage a caring classroom environment. With this construction of a caring environment, teachers must should “focus on what children can do, rather than on what they cannot do” (Weinstein & Miganano, 2007, p. 76). By looking for what is great within each student, a caring teacher can mitigate what is lacking in a student’s behavior.

Eleanor does this by “acknowledging good behavior as well as bad behaviors.” If a teacher constantly focuses on misbehavior, she is acknowledging only one part of the child. Eleanor goes on to explain why a multifaceted approach to discipline is important:

I definitely reward good behavior, but I just try to get them to see that for your actions, there are good consequences as well as bad consequences, but that we really want to have the positive consequences and most of the students...just knowing that they make the difference. Ok, so I try to get them to understand that they are the difference and that’s what’s really going to impact caring...It wouldn’t happen without them, so their interactions in class and I’m modeling, but I need to make sure that they’re being receptive and understand the importance of caring.

Eleanor’s actions are reminiscent to Noddings' (2002) beliefs about dialogue, modeling, and confirmation as the basis for caring interactions with students. Students need opportunities to discuss their behaviors and understand why their teacher reacted to those behaviors in a certain way. Teachers need to model respect and compassion with students, so students in turn can do that with each other. Students also need confirmation to understand how their behaviors can have positive consequences, not just negative ones. Unrath & Kerridge (2009) affirmed this belief, noting that, “within the classroom

community it is important to achieve a sense of belonging—letting each learner have a presence and a voice” (p. 282). Confirming a child’s presence and voice in a positive and caring way is essential. If students are always told how they are doing something wrong, they may never believe they are capable of doing something right. Ghila remarked, “You have to be pretty strict to create a caring environment.” When I asked her what she meant by that, she said, “It’s not like a lesson plan, but you can feel when you walk into a room if kids are engaged, if kids are letting other kids be, if kids are enjoying what they’re doing...But I think it’s a kind of atmosphere you create and a respect you create. It’s sort of a discipline in a way.” That caring discipline can encourage positive interactions between teacher and students and help students become stronger artists.

This discipline in art can be found in attentiveness, which I believe appears when students demonstrate care about their artwork. All of the participants value attention to detail and learning skills. Part of caring for students is teaching ways to create art, such as learning proportions in portraits, perspective techniques in landscapes, and color theory in painting. When teaching concepts in art, all of these teachers emphasized attending, paying attention to one’s work, and taking time to make good art. Few things disappoint me more than when my students rush through an assignment. I seem to have a few students in each class who tell me they are finished five times before they actually have completed their work. Sometimes I wondered if the assignment was not interesting enough for them. But more often, it was because the concept was difficult and my students simply did not want to put in the work to understand it. They were afraid they would make a mistake.

I wondered if my participants felt the same way. I asked each of them if paying attention to one's work was a part of caring. All teachers wanted their students to make their best work. Yael encouraged student attention by being attentive to their needs. She reflected, "You have to pay attention" to see when a student feels successful learning a skill or concept. One of the ways Yael believed she could measure caring is by being attentive:

The way that I kind of measure is when you just sort of like see that little glow. When you see that little bit of...of I did...oh, oh! Ok, yeah, I get this! I did it! This doesn't look that bad! When that little spark kind of goes off...You feel like for even one instant that they felt cared about and...you know that they feel like that they are an artist. And they can do it.

This attentiveness is the basis for her pedagogy. If she is not paying attention to her students and acknowledging their successes (and conversely, assisting them when they are struggling), Yael could not expect her students to attend to their work or to care about what they are doing. This reciprocal attentiveness can foster accountability, where students know their teacher is paying attention and expects their best efforts. Those high expectations are critical to caring classrooms.

Part of this expectation entails encouraging students to take their time when working. Art is not a race. Ghila told me she had to constantly remind students "to slow down. Slow down, take your time. We're not going to finish today. This will take several periods." She continued, "I take it seriously, so I want them to take it seriously." Ghila has high standards for her teaching, so it is a natural that she would extend those standards to her students. Eleanor also included standards when discussing attention. She notes, "I want to set the bar high, but at the same time I have to remember what they're actually capable of doing." I thought this was an important point: High standards

are critical, but they should not be unrealistic. Eleanor had to “know when to let it go because I will definitely point out what I think a child needs to do to improve their artwork, but at the same time...I don’t want to take them to the point where they get like, ‘Oh my God! Can this woman leave me alone?’” This made her laugh, probably because she had these interactions often with her students and she has learned how to be more attentive to their needs, while keeping realistic expectations of her students’ capabilities. Attending and acknowledging is one of “the most powerful tools” at teacher can use with students (Weinstein & Miganano, 2007, p. 77). Finding this balance is difficult for all teachers, but paying attention to it is a hallmark of a caring teacher.

### **Structures of Care/Performances of Care**

Now that I have examined a few themes found in the data, I turn to the structure of the narrative for insight. The work of Labov & Waletzky (1967) is often cited when looking at the structure of narratives. Their research involves stories from African American and Caucasian speakers, representing a wide-range of ages and socio-economic groups. Rather than looking at the themes to define narratives, the “structural approach to analyzing stories provided by sociolinguists such as Labov and Waletzky reveals how the narrator frames the experience described, the meanings they make from the event, as well as how they want to convey the event to particular audiences” (Roulston, 2010, p. 163-164). Since structural analysis takes the audience into account, I am also looking at dialogic/performance analysis in this section. Riessman (2008) separated structural from dialogic/performance, noting that “dialogic/performance analysis is not equivalent to thematic and structural, but rather a broad and varied interpretative approach to oral narrative that makes selective use of elements of the other two methods and adds other

dimensions” (p. 105). For the purposes of this paper, I apply structural analysis to narratives from Eleanor and Ghila, while using dialogic/performance for Yael’s narrative. I returned to each woman’s origin stories to see if different forms of analysis could yield a greater number of interpretations.

### **Structuring a Story**

Based on Labov & Waletzky's (1967) research, Riessman (2008) and Roulston (2010) described six elements of narrative structure: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and a coda. An abstract summarizes the story, while the orientation contains clauses that orient the listener to the setting, characters, and situation happening in the story. The complicating action involves the sequence of events. An evaluation occurs when the narrator comments on the plot and gives meaning to the story. Finally the resolution and the coda describe the outcome and give closure to the narrative. First I will examine Ghila’s story of how she became an art teacher, then look at Eleanor’s narrative.

Ghila began teaching at her school when the previous art teacher went out of the country and needed a substitute. Here is her narrative again, but I followed Roulston's (2010) example and marked the different structural components on the left side of the paragraph. I also included the beginning of Ghila’s response to my question of how she became an art teacher.



<b>Abstract</b>	Ok. All right. I started out being an art teacher when my children were in elementary school. And the art teacher at that time—I was very active at the school by the way—and the art teacher at that time was going to be leaving. But she was...before...now let me start back again. She wasn't actually leaving then, but she was going away for a week back to South America for a visit and she asked me if I would be interested in taking her classes. And I said yes I would try (laughs) and that week was a wonderful experience. I actually had my students draw their shoes. And the art teacher that was teaching at that school did not have a strong background in drawing, so she mainly did pottery and weaving with them. Which was nice, but they had not had any drawing lessons. And so it was very exciting for the rest of the teachers at the school to see that those kids were so talented. And the shoes were wonderful and that was a great start. So then, the teacher came and finished the year out and then she was moving and I interviewed for the job. But back then, art at our school was not supported by the county so the parents paid for the art program.
<b>Orientation</b>	
<b>Complicating Action</b>	
<b>Evaluation</b>	
<b>Resolution</b>	
<b>Coda</b>	

What is so interesting is how Ghila's story closely follows the format described by Labov & Waletzky (1967). She oriented me to the situation: Since she was active in the school and the art teacher was going away, she substituted in art classes. The complicating action involved Ghila teaching a shoe drawing lesson, which was new for the students. Ghila evaluated the drawing lesson as successful and other teachers agreed. The narrative's resolution and coda described the art teacher returning, but then leaving at the end of the school year and Ghila interviewing for the art position. Drawing, shoes, parent, and success were a few themes of this narrative. Looking at this narrative structurally, I see how Ghila contrasted herself from the previous art teacher, how she was proud of her initial attempt at teaching, and the support she felt from students and other teachers. The themes gave me good starting points, while the structure showed more complexity. The relationships, between Ghila and the students, Ghila and the previous art teacher, and Ghila and the other teachers, are all more apparent in a

structural analysis. The structure also shows how Ghila related the story to me. She had to start over, offer background knowledge, convey her emotions, and explain her actions. She was laying the foundation for what she thought a caring art program should have: student engagement, school involvement, and a strong emphasis on learning skills and techniques.

A structured analysis of Eleanor's story about teaching at a middle school reveals while she was only there one year, she learned lessons that she carried to her current job. This is the narrative that summarizes her middle school experience. I included more of her statement at the end of the narrative.

<b>Abstract</b>	It was great for my first year because the class sizes were intimate and so I really got a chance to kind of dig in and just enjoy the students and the projects. Now the only thing was, the dilemma during my first year was, that I found out that the previous art teacher passed away and they never hired another art teacher. It had been five years since that school had an art teacher...Basically I had to start from scratch. I had eight grade students that had not had art the entire time they attended that school, as well as seventh...So I had to start with the basics... I was able to get past that and to just kind of grind it in teaching. I wish that I had been more connected. I felt like I was on an island under my first year. But I guess it just worked...that was the best thing that could have happened because I was able to immerse myself in teaching.
<b>Orientation</b>	
<b>Complicating Action</b>	
<b>Evaluation</b>	
<b>Resolution</b>	
<b>Coda</b>	

Once again, another layer can be examined by looking at the structure of Eleanor's story. The themes I originally picked out from this narrative included: starting from scratch, on an island, close relationship with students. Eleanor began her story with an overall description of her immersion with her students into the art projects (abstract/orientation). However, Eleanor's story was complicated by the death of the previous teacher and the students not having art class at their school until she arrived (complicating action). She started from scratch and taught the students the basics (evaluation). Her narrative concluded with her getting "past it," but being "on an island" (resolution). However, she

felt like things worked out because she could concentrate on her students and learn how to be a teacher (coda). As with Ghila's story, Eleanor explained her actions to me and conveyed the ups and downs of the first year of teaching. The structure of the narrative explored the joy and frustration she felt, as well as foreshadowed traits that she exhibits in her current job: her hard-working demeanor, her close relationship with her students, and her desire for connection. These are some of the dispositions of a caring teacher. Riessman (2008) observed, "[because] it take language structural narrative analysis provides tool for investigators who want to interrogate how participants use speech to construct themselves and their histories" (p. 103). By looking at the structure of Ghila's and Eleanor's origin stories, I saw how both of these woman "constructed themselves" and built the foundations of caring art programs.

### **Performing a Story**

Yael stated, "In a previous life...I really enjoyed performance art." Therefore, it seemed like a natural fit to apply dialogue/performance analysis to her origin story. Riessman (2008) posed a couple of questions to guide this type of analysis: How does context influence the story? How do the narrator and listener interact? What are the power relationships involved? All of these inform the performance.

Since I am using dialogue/performance analysis, I am including my reactions to Yael's narrative of how she became an art teacher (Transcript 4).

## Transcript 4

Y: I had, in my misspent hippy youth, been very crafty and unfortunately when I was growing up, there was no art in school. I have sporadic memories of doing something nice and someone recognizing it. So, when I finally was able to, through [a] scholarship, actually go to State University and say: “Hi, I want to be an art teacher!” And have the person look at me like I was daft beyond belief because I was 41 and they were like: “Yeah, right.”

L: Was this a person in admissions or just...

Y: Everybody

L: Everybody. Ok.

Y: Everybody, pretty much (laughs). So, I started taking classes, because I was still working as a paraprofessional, at night and because I had gone to the school of extremely hard knocks, I was literally starting from Math 88, I know there’s no such thing, but Math 88 and English 101 at night in the bowels of State. Being taught by the requisite, not that there’s anything wrong with it, Seinfeld-esque, lesbian teacher, who read us mostly her lesbian poetry. Not that there’s anything wrong with it! (laughs)

L: (laughs) No

Y: Right? It was cool. It was ok. So finally after five years, I had finished the majority of the basic classes that you had to take and was able to be accepted into the program.

And realized that I was going to have to quit and start taking out student loans, which I did, and still owe about \$40,000.

L: Welcome to my world!

Y: Yes, I’m sure, honey! I have no doubt. So I was able to go full-time. It was sort of like the whole experience, it was a ten-year odyssey. The whole experience was sort of like when you defragged your old computer, where it would go, sort of like a Pac Man—chik chik chik chik chik—be eating and then all of the sudden it would come to some information. It was like: “Oh, oh, ok!” So I graduated in 2002, with honors.

Yael is a heroine in her educational epic. She was crafty, but she didn’t have any art classes to support her creative ideas. She worked various jobs before she could afford to go to school, but no one supported in her. She survived indifferent admission administrators and started with the most basic classes (taught in the basement by an indifferent teacher!) before she could take art and education classes. More financial hardship followed because she had quit her job to continue school. Yet, nothing could stop Yael. She survived her ten-year odyssey and not only graduated, but graduated with honors. It is an amazing story of perseverance, a recurring theme in Yael’s stories. It

also drove her motivation to care for her students: She cared for them because no one cared for her. She did not want her students to suffer like she did.

I was impressed by her story, but tried to remain neutral during her performance. This was hard because she encouraged dialogue with me. She made funny observations about her experience. She related to our shared experience with student loans. At first, I had a hard time believing no one cared for her. Surely someone encouraged her, otherwise why else would she endure such a difficult journey alone? Yet, I believe Yael has performed this story many times. Throughout all interviews, she returned to this theme of persistence despite the odds against her. To revisit a quote from the beginning of this chapter, Yael had explained her belief as, “this desire to persevere...this desire to say, you know, to say: Ok this is my goal and to, you know, bloody your head on that wall until it falls, to do it. To actually do it.” I believe her narrative, not only because she was consistent in performances, but also because of the passion of her performances. I always root for the underdog. Riessman (2008) believed “investigators carry their identities with them like tortoise shells into the research setting, reflexively interrogating their influences on the production and interpretation of narrative data” (p. 139). These identities are on display in this form of analysis. The reader also plays a role in interpretation: “intersubjectivity and reflexivity come to the fore as there is a dialogue between researcher and researched, text and reader, knower and known” (Riessman, 2008, p. 137). I participated in Yael’s performance because I care about her history. I want to document her triumph and record her story of persistence as a model for others. Besides, Yael put on a great show. She conveyed the sadness and determination needed for her role as long-suffering, yet ultimately triumphant, art teacher.

## Transcript 5

*L:* Exactly. Nothing has stopped you yet.

*Y:* No, you know, I have to smile a lot.

*L:* But I think that's says something: Some people make just have a little more of that than others.

*Y:* Yeah and I think, you know, to one extent or another, sometimes you...come to a realization. That you have a choice: Every day when you get up, you can make it a great day or you can walk around going: Ugh and make it a negative day, you know. But it's you know, you just make it best day that you can because you just have no guarantees.

In our last interview, I found out Yael had been fighting a serious illness during this school year. I was worried about her, but I should have known she was not going to be defeated. Nothing has stopped her yet (Transcript 5).

I found I could gain insight by analyzing my data by looking at the structure and performance aspects of the interviews. There is one more way to analyze the data I have collected over the past year. I took photographs of each teacher's classroom. I found this visual form of analysis offered a different way to see the data and gain additional understanding on the nature of caring in these classrooms.

### **Pictures of Care**

As an art educator, I know much can be learned from images. Visual analysis relies upon close reading of an image and attention to the details found in an image (Riessman, 2008). I focused my visual analysis on photographs of each participant's classroom. In a way, photography can be seen as a form of memory (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). We can construct images and memories together to add layers to a story. Bach (2007) believes "photographs...are a way of sharing experiences—the everydayness of lived experience" (p. 282). O'Donoghue (2010) compared analyzing photographs of classrooms to installation art: "Considering the classroom as an

installation offers an opportunity to imagine it as a space of relations” (p. 411).

Capturing the ‘everydayness’ of my participants and discovering relationships through photographs is the last layer of analysis of these teachers’ narratives of care in their classrooms.

I took photographs of each participant’s classrooms after the students left for the day. My IRB did not allow for interactions with students, so I was careful not to include close pictures of student work. The photos did give me a sense of how space impacts caring in their rooms. It also gave me a sense of each teacher’s personality. Eleanor’s classroom is bright and colorful, with posters on every wall. She has room for different sized chairs and tables for different ages. Ghila’s room is warm and filled with light, due to huge skylights. I was envious of all of her storage: rows upon rows of drawers, shelves, and cubbies. It is incredibly organized. Yael’s room is long and narrow. It has a little bit of everything, including a huge interactive white board, artwork everywhere, and wall of windows. Her room was not the most organized, but it did feel like a real art teachers room, with supplies scattered throughout.

I took several pictures of each art room, but I am only focusing on nine images for my analysis. My intention was to document the spaces, but I tried to also focus on aspects that my participants discussed. Eleanor talked about the colors of her room during two interviews. I also included pictures of her posters and her bulletin board that displayed the theme for her Night of the Arts. I documented some of the stuffed animals Ghila used for her stories, as well as the space her students inhabit when she told her stories and taught lessons. In Yael’s room, I focused on her posters, which expressed her teaching philosophy. I also documented an artwork she created. Every participant

discussed the difficulty of creating personal art outside of her teaching responsibilities. While Yael was not the only teacher who used her artwork to teach students (Ghila showed her students her high school sketchbooks), she was the only one who had personal artwork inside the room on the day I photographed the space.

Riessman (2008) discussed the history of visual documentation in anthropology and sociology, where social scientists used photography to illustrate their research. Now, more researchers use photography, videos, painting, and other forms of visual media to both illustrate and add another layer of interpretation. How a picture is composed, why it was taken, what role the participant played in dictating what to document, are all questions to ask about visual data. As Riessman (2008) has remarked, “We have to make arguments in words about images, that is, contextualize and interpret them in light of theoretical questions” (p. 143). In dealing with issues of caring in art rooms, these images add another layer of understanding how these teachers care for their students.

### **Eleanor’s Room**

Eleanor was allowed to paint her room, so she painted one wall purple, an adjacent wall yellow, another wall orange, and another wall blue. Her room is large and L-shaped, so she left some walls white. She explained why she painted her walls during our first interview:

I asked my principal if she minded if I painted my walls. First, she was kind of skeptical, I could tell by her reaction and she wanted to know, well, paint it how? So I said it’s not going to be very flashy. Basically what I did was use complementary colors and just painted one wall yellow, one purple, one blue, and one orange. And then I left a couple of the walls free, so that it wouldn’t feel as though the whole thing was bombarded. But I love color and so typically during the school year, when you come in you’re going to see a lot of color. And then I’ve had compliments from parents, especially from new parents, people that come in and tour or families that come in and tour, that they just feel like the



room is very inviting and they would love art, or they would have loved that experience when they were taught art. I take comfort in that.

Eleanor stated her desire to create a space that encourages artistic expression. Her posters, both handmade IB documents and inspirational posters she purchased, serve as visual reminders of her caring philosophy. They are also teaching tools. Like Yael and Ghila, Eleanor recognized the importance of visualizing the vocabulary of art while teaching art. All three teachers had art vocabulary posters in their classrooms, including color theory charts, elements and principles of art lists, and art exemplars from different artists and eras. Each teacher taught students who learned English as a second language. Each teacher had given assessments that focused on vocabulary. By using posters and other visuals to teach vocabulary, these teachers showed how they cared for their students by reinforcing vocabulary in visual formats.

Eleanor also reinforced IB profiles and attitudes by hanging them in prominent places in her classroom (figure 3). She frequently pointed to these handmade visuals when discussing classroom procedures with new students or reinforcing rules in situations involving discipline. Any teacher can hang posters in her classroom to make her space more beautiful, but caring teachers actively use those visuals to encourage and educate students on how they should work and learn in these spaces (figure 4). This is also apparent in figure 5, Eleanor's bulletin board that displayed her theme for her Night of the Arts show. This board is located in the middle of her classroom, where every child can see it. With the bright pattern, bold letters, and photographs, it is not a subtle display, but rather a big reminder to students about what they are working towards during the school year. This sends a message about the importance of the art show. It also lets Eleanor's students know that they are not only creating art for themselves, but for others.

By thinking about how they can “take a walk” in someone else’s shoes, her students also have the chance to experience “the imaginative capacity that allows us to experience empathy with different points of view...where we can come face to face with others and call out, ‘Here we are’” (Greene, 1995, p. 31). Eleanor’s room, with its bright colors, encouraging posters, and relevant vocabulary, is a space where students can imagine how their work can positively impact the lives of others.



*Figure 3. IB Learner Profile display in Eleanor’s classroom*



*Figure 4. Eleanor's motivational posters*



*Figure 5. Eleanor's bulletin board showing the theme of the Night of the Arts*

### **Ghila's Room**

Ghila's room used to be a middle school art room, so her space was the largest of any of the classrooms I visited. She had ample storage, which was great for storing student assignments, her books, as well as her stuffed animal collection. An enormous,

colorful rug in the corner of her room was where her students sat and listened to the lesson at the beginning of class or the story at the end of class. Ghila has used an interactive whiteboard to explain techniques, show videos of artists, or project maps of where Oko has gone on his latest adventure. She also uses other visuals, such as posters and display boards. The display boards were essential when she taught art from a cart. She did not want to erase other teachers' boards, concerned she might disrupt what they were teaching after her art lesson. She also wanted to give students information quickly. She still uses some boards to help her teach art lessons, as seen in figure 6.

Ghila's love of animals is also on display. She has her stuffed animals on shelves near the rug, so she can reach for them easily when Oko had a friend in a particular story. She also used papier-mâché animals to designate different areas of her room, like the colorful bird hanging from the ceiling in figure 8. Ghila really researched and prepared for every story she told her students, so she needed to organize her space in a way for her easily pull out an animal needed for a particular tale or a book to show students where an animal may live. Oko has costumes to go with the story being told.



*Figure 6.* Front of Ghila's classroom

In figure 7, he is dressed in a Halloween costume.

Ok, I usually try to tell, more or less, the same story to all the grades, but to bump it up for the big ones and bump it down for the little four-year olds. A lot of my stories are animal-based and the kids get a kick out of me introducing animals they've never heard about. So I choose these obscure, rare animals when I get to travel. I'm always on the look out for some, you know, obscure animal from where I am and then the kids enjoy guessing what it is. And then that animal's traits can be worked into some kind of caring theme.

Ghila also puts this level of preparation into her lesson planning. The large amount of research that Ghila does for everything she presents to her students shows her dedication to their education. It is a way she has cared for her students since she began teaching.



*Figure 7.* Oko, the okapi in Ghila's classroom





*Figure 8.* Ghila's storage spaces with her animals.

Unfortunately, my IRB did not allow for me to show student artwork without permission from the students, so I did not take pictures of Ghila's art displays in her hallway. These displays were another way she cared for students. Every child in a class had his or her work on display. No child was left out. Ghila also wrote out an explanation besides the display, which discussed the artists studied and the techniques learned. Every hallway in Ghila's school seemed to have an art display on the walls. The entire school was filled with art. Ghila's intention was to turn her school into a museum, where everyone could learn about art and see the creativity and skill of her students.

### **Yael's Room**

Yael's room, like Eleanor's had posters that explicitly encouraged caring in art class, such as the "Live Love" and "Hope" posters that surround the English and Spanish elements of art posters in figure 9.



*Figure 9. Yael's display in her classroom*

This display is an example of visualizing vocabulary for deeper understanding and surrounding the art vocabulary with caring words of encouragement. When Yael spoke of her “misspent, hippie youth” earlier, I do not think that hippie spirit ever left her. She became a hippie art teacher, declaring her beliefs about caring on her walls with her colorful posters. It would be easy to say these posters were simply decoration. Yet through our conversations about her journey to become an art teacher, I sensed Yael truly believed these affirmations and applied them in her teaching. She believed making art allowed for the cultivation of hope, the fulfillment of dreams, and the elevation of creativity. Her posters were declarations of her beliefs about caring, not just pretty words. I missed an opportunity by not asking Yael why she chose to display these posters about love and peace on her walls with her art vocabulary visuals. But these photographs still document how Yael filled her space and encouraged caring behaviors.



*Figure 10.* Recycled marker artwork

Yael also used lots of recycled materials in her art projects with her students. I think this also represented her hippie spirit and care for the environment. Students made sandpaper prints by rubbing old, broken crayons onto a piece of sandpaper, then Yael would take a warm iron and press a piece of paper onto their sandpaper drawings. Figure 10 shows old marker caps arranged in boxes in an ode to Louise Nevelson's assemblage sculptures. Yael did not really discuss the importance of recycling during the interviews, but after analyzing the photos of her classroom, a recycling theme is evident in many ways.

At the end of our last interview, Yael showed me a mixed media piece of hers (figure 11). The base of this piece was a chenille bedspread that was her mother's. Probably more than my other two participants, Yael lamented how the obligations that go along with teaching—the assessments, the meetings, after school activities—left little time for creating personal art. She knew art has been what made her happy, but the



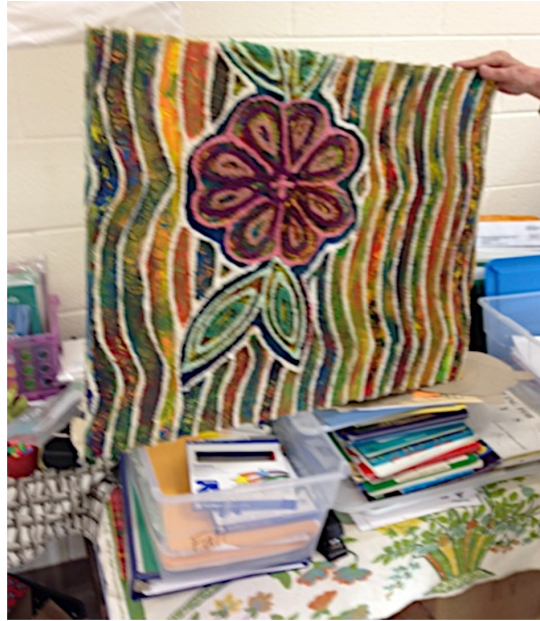
exhausting nature of her job left her with little time or energy to actually find time for creating. In the meantime, she coped with her reality:

You have to just laugh. You really do; you have to look at it as being, you know, it's ok. And to just find the joy because some days it's awfully hard to find your joy. It really is. You of all people know, I mean, you don't go...unless I should throttle you, you don't go home and go down to your art room, to your art room at home, and make your own art!

In our third interview, Yael described going to Asheville for a weekend getaway with her husband. She met an artist there and went on to describe how that woman left her corporate job to find happiness creating and selling art. The woman said she “would go home exhausted and go into my art room so I could do art.” She then told Yael, “That is what you need to do.” Yael agreed, but she has still not found a way to strike a balance, something many art teachers struggle with. A love of creating art and being an artist is why many people enter art education. We are fortunate to get to share that love with our students everyday. And while sharing our love of art with students is enough for some art teachers, it does not replace the need to create art outside of the classroom that many art teachers need in order to maintain their balance. When we become stressed or tired, it affects how we care for our students. I asked Yael what she wanted her students to remember about her. She replied:

I'd like them to think to realize that the art teacher is also an artist and when, you know, when I look down the stairs and see my little art room door open and there are cobwebs across it...because you know when I get home like...oh dear, let me just sit down here. But to see me as a kind and sweet person and I think that most of them see me in a positive and don't see me as being an ogre or meanie.

Yael's chenille painting is a small reminder to her and her students that creating art is an essential part of who she is. It is symbol of her persistence to continue to create, even though she does not have as much time or energy. Yael has been through so much in her



*Figure 11.* Mixed media artwork created by Yael

life, yet despite everything she still has a desire to create and make sense of her world through art. I hope she can regain the balance she has been searching for so she can open the art room door in her home again.

### **Making Sense of Visual Research**

Bach (2007) found that photography, like narratives, could let “multiple selves speak, and these selves are temporal productions residing in both the present and reconstructed past” (p. 285). In these nine photographs from my participants’ classrooms, I wanted to see how their spaces encouraged caring behaviors, but I ended up learning more about how they acted in caring ways. These photographs show how each teacher created her space, not as a static entity, but an active, living place, where students can learn about art. Each teacher’s classroom was an “immersive space to be entered into but are constructed with a particular purpose in mind, to be experienced in particular ways” (O’Donoghue, 2010, p. 413). Art vocabulary and exemplars surrounded students in all three rooms. These spaces transmitted messages about caring explicitly, as seen in

Eleanor's and Yael's posters. These spaces also supported caring activities, like Ghila's stories, by giving a place for the props and books she used for storytelling. The photographs, along with the interviews, drew out themes important to each participant. As Bach (2007) realized, "a deeper understanding is gained of both the photograph and the story when stories [and photographs] are laid side by side and overlap" (p. 303). The interviews and photographs overlap each other in time, going back and forth between past, present, and future. Like any good story, a good analysis must take the temporal realities into account. It requires imagination to weave the data into a coherent structure that makes sense of the effect of different times on our stories.

Now that I have looked at themes, structures, performances, and photographic data from my research. It is time to bring a sharper focus and return to the questions that started my research.

CHAPTER FIVE  
MAKING SENSE OF CARING

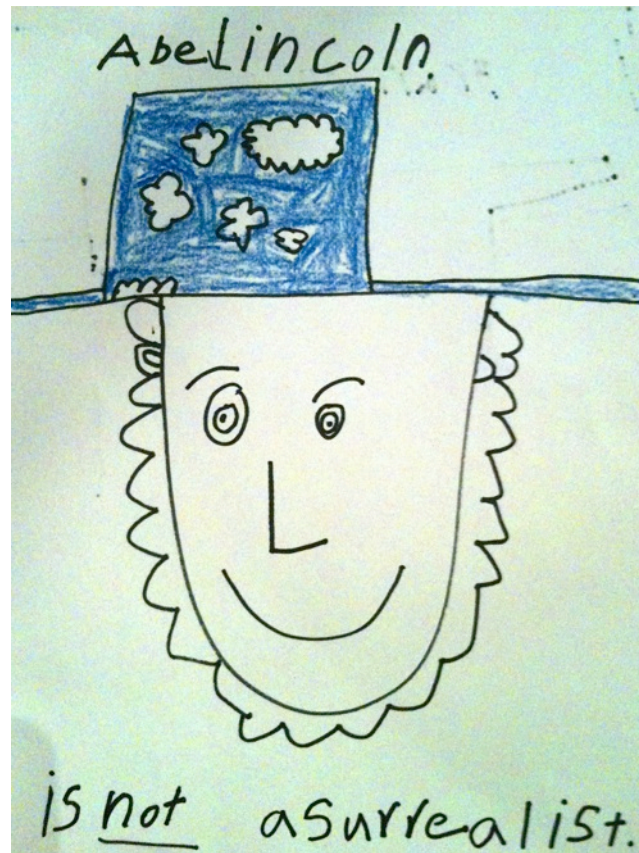


Figure 12. Abe Lincoln is not a surrealist

*My school has an International Night every May. It is the same night as our school-wide art show. Our cafeteria overflows every year with artwork from nearly two thousand students. In addition to this huge art exhibit, every classroom creates displays about different countries around the world that hang in the hallways. The music teachers have been teaching the students songs from many cultures for months in preparation for a massive concert on the front driveway of the school. International Night is a huge celebration of the many cultures and nationalities at my school. It is a big deal.*

*A few years back, one of my kindergarten classes had Belgium as their country. This was ironic because no one from our school had cultural ties with Belgium. The majority of our students are Hispanic. I struggled to think of ways to make Belgian art relevant to them. All I could think about was beer and chocolate, which they were already studying in their classroom (chocolate, not beer). Then I remembered Magritte! Magritte was from Belgium! Of course, finding an appropriate Magritte painting that was not too strange was hard. I came across "The Large Family." One of his later paintings, it depicted a silhouette of a bird in flight with clouds inside of its body on top of a seascape. It was perfect!*

*It's almost comical, watching confused faces as I discussed why we are drawing a bird, but instead of feathers, we are putting clouds inside it. Why? Because Magritte drew birds with clouds inside them and Magritte was a surrealist artist from Belgium and I am supporting the general curriculum at our school. That's why.*

*Nevertheless, the kindergarteners went above my expectations. Everyone enthusiastically drew birds with clouds inside of them. Since I did not want to stifle creativity, I encouraged students to add rainbows, suns, moons, and raindrops. I am supporting the science curriculum and creative thinking too. I am such a great art teacher.*

*The next day we reviewed Magritte's birds and surrealism. I reminded the students that surrealists drew pictures from their dreams. A little boy raised your hand, "You mean like Abraham Lincoln?" "No," I laughed, "Abraham Lincoln was not a surrealist." His neighbor chimes in, "What about George Washington?" "No, no," I stammered, starting to worry that the conversation had veered off course. Then I*

*remembered all kindergarteners just finished studying President's Day. They learned that Abraham Lincoln and George Washington were great men who followed their dreams to lead our nation. It made perfect sense why six year-olds thought Abraham Lincoln was a surrealist.*

What does this story have to do with caring? Does it prove I really cared about my school's International Night? That I cared about cross-curricular learning? That my students cared about Abraham Lincoln and George Washington? No, it proves none of those things. Yet, it illustrates how a complex subject like caring can be confusing and misinterpreted, even with the best intentions to clarify and illuminate. At times during my analysis, I felt as if I was drawing a bird with clouds in it. I was trying to make something beautiful and transcendent, like a great work of art. The question is: Did I come close to Magritte's elegant bird? Or did I turn Abraham Lincoln into a surrealist?

This section is an attempt to bring clarity by reviewing my research questions and drawing conclusions from the analysis. It is a way of making sense of caring in context, both for my participants and myself. I have studied caring in art education for so long. At times, it seemed like I have taken a "metaphoric shot gun" like Yael mentioned when describing assessments and curriculum. I shot out some themes, described some structures, and even reenacted performances. Unless I return to my research questions, all of the great data and reflective analysis will make little sense. I realize I am not Magritte, but I do not want to be a surrealist Abraham Lincoln either.

### **Returning to the Research Questions**

I had four research questions to help me examine elementary art teachers' narrative of care. Through eight interviews, transcription, and analysis, I feel I have a better understanding of my research and can discuss implications for further study.

**Research Question 1: In what ways do art teachers' narratives illustrate the nature of care in their classrooms?**

**Research Question 2: In what ways do art teachers' narratives help them to define care in their classrooms?**

Thinking about caring in the context of teaching reminds me of Dewey's (1997) *How We Think*. Dewey has never been an easy read for me. He often made obscure connections, like linking discipline of the mind to drilling into a tough material. It's a good metaphor, but it required several readings for the meaning to sink in. Not that this is an unworthy endeavor. Like anything worth effort, expanding thinking is never a bad idea.

Dewey (1997) believed "the origin of thinking is some perplexity, confusion, or doubt. Thinking is not a case of spontaneous combustion" (p. 12). I think he meant thinking does not just happen; it happens because it is provoked. Thought happens because it is stirred. Answering these two research questions required much provocation. Since these questions are so intertwined, I decided to address them together. The first question asks how narratives *illustrate* the nature of caring, while the second asks how narratives help teachers *define* caring. In other words, I am looking for stories that show

how caring happens in these art rooms and I am also examining how narratives help teachers explain caring.

I found all of my teachers gave me many examples of how they cared for and cared about their students. Children's "art should be complimented and should be empowered because how many adults do you run into that say, 'I can't draw a stick!'" Yael told me in our first interview. Ghila repeated that belief, "My goal is that these students will leave this room feeling more successful about themselves, so if they come into this room and they think: Wow, this is something I can do!" Eleanor felt the same way, believing art can lead to "the blossoming of students." These women were not only teaching about artists and techniques, but also giving their students tools for success in future endeavors. These tools included perseverance, creativity, and adaptability. They taught connections to other school subjects, as well as related to the cultural backgrounds to their students. They found ways to be relevant in their school, although some were more successful than others. They cared about teaching art despite the additional assessments, larger class sizes, and numerous demands on them outside of school.

My participants' origin stories were some of the best illustrations the nature of caring in their classrooms. One of the reasons Ghila loved to tell stories to her students because her father was a storyteller: "I grew up in a family where my father told me lots of fun stories and so I realized children are never too big for stories." Her stories gave her a way to share her personality with her students, especially her love of travel and animals. They allowed her to relate to her students on a personal level and give her students a way to share in her world.



Eleanor's commitment to her community and her desire to be an advocate for children, led her to become a leader in her school and look for ways to connect the arts to the IB program so her students could have a comprehensive education. Yael's lack of encouragement for her creativity in her youth spurred her to make sure her students' efforts in art class were always acknowledged. These women's paths to art education were not traditional, but because their journeys took a little longer, they had very reflective observations on the impact of caring, both in their lives and in their classrooms. I am not implying that an art teacher needs to go through other careers before teaching. I knew I wanted to teach in second grade and set out to study art education my first semester in college. Yet, it has taken me fifteen years in the classroom, and over eight years in graduate school, to gain the small amount of insight on caring that I now possess. I could study caring for another fifteen years and still feel I have more themes to explore, more teachers to interview, and more questions than answers.

Yael was an entertaining storyteller. I could not stop laughing when she told the Coca-Cola polar bear story. I listened with great interest as she described her epic journey to become an art teacher. Yet, she only told me one other story about a former student who went to architecture school because she and a high school art teacher "really loved" him. Because of that love and support, "there will be some amazing building that is built because [we] encouraged him." Yael had trouble forming narratives about her current students, as did Eleanor and Ghila. They all told stories where they interacted students in caring ways. Eleanor spoke of "teachable moments" in her classroom, where she would redirect a child who was off-task and other students would model more appropriate behavior. Ghila discussed helping a new student:

He was having issues with weaving and he knew how to weave, but he kept saying he didn't want friends...He's new to the school and he hasn't really found his friend base in the classroom. But him having his hands on this loom, just trying to talk to him, I can't say if I got through to him. But I think it's very much like art therapy.

However, none of my participants could tell me about a specific situation where current students were caring for one another. One factor may be the nature of art instruction at the elementary level. Most art teachers see their students once a week, for less than forty-five minutes at a time. Unlike classroom teachers who spends hours with their students every day, or even a middle or high school art teacher who may spend weeks or semesters with the same students, an elementary art teacher sees her students for brief sessions. Building a relationship with a student and witnessing the results of caring pedagogy may take years. This does not mean these moments rarely occur. We cannot witness every caring act that happens within our walls, nor are all of those moments worth turning into narratives. One student praised another student's work. Another student helped his classmates clean up their materials. Students worked together to make art for a local charity. All caring moments, yet not all are necessarily story material. These moments are also harder to describe because there is not enough distance from them and not enough time to reflect upon them. Part of the reason Yael could weave a tale about David and his polar bear drawing because it happened years ago. Hankins (2003) perfectly summarized the need for time when telling stories, especially stories from the classroom:

I am aware of the multiple "takes" that are possible on the way that each of us has lived the same event. In writing my own take, my interpretation, I do so always with the hope that while the writing illuminates my understanding of the event, it will also shape the way I understand similar events that will occur in the future. Past, present, and future are contained in any moment that we are fully aware of living; it is never only "now." (p. 17)

Hankins goes on to say, “We experience time as events, memories, dreams, and relationships” (p. 17). Recalling a caring event in the classroom requires time to form the “takes” Hankins spoke of. If I had the opportunity to interview Ghila, Yael, and Eleanor over years, not just months, I could probably get many more narratives of caring. When I reflected upon my own process of creating narratives, I realized my stories were never instantaneous. Many stories required years of thought, revision, addition, and time away. To expect my interviewees to come up with stories or descriptions of how their students showed caring beyond typical examples of sharing materials, modeling appropriate behaviors, and saying kind words is asking for a lot.

Clandinin (2013) saw temporality as “threaded into place and into events and emotions. The dimensions are not separated from one another” (p. 50). She discussed time as part of a “metaphorical three-dimensional” space “embodied in a person living and telling his/her life” (p. 40). This is another reason why I found the origin stories were particularly informative about the nature of caring in my participants’ classrooms. Each woman had years to experience these stories and articulate them into meaning narratives that can explain how they became caring educators.

The origin stories also helped my participants define caring in their own terms. The definitions are personal and relate back to prior experiences. Caring is ingrained in Yael’s practice because she did not experience support for her artistic capabilities in her life. Caring mattered to Eleanor because of her belief in advocacy and the power of art to create connections. Ghila practiced caring, in part, because others practiced caring with her, supporting her program and helping her learn to become an art teacher. These experiences marked these women and shaped their classroom practices and beliefs. Their

journeys to art education defined how caring (and lack of caring) impacted their lives and in turn, shaped what caring personally means to them.

### **Research Question 3: What are teachers' personal definitions of caring?**

Despite these formative experiences, defining caring was not easy for my participants. I know it was not easy for me either. I described Noddings' (2002) ideas about dialogue, modeling, and confirmation. I related to Held's (2006) beliefs about caring as both value and practice. My definition is still nebulous. I do not want to define caring as much as I would rather describe it. I decided before the interviews not to share my definition with any of the teachers. I did not want to influence their definitions, but I also hoped they would figure out a succinct, clear definition that had eluded me.

Naturally, my participants echoed my unease about defining something known in the heart, but complicated by language. My struggle with defining caring could be related with the problem of assessment all of my interviewees discussed. We all know assessment in art class is (and has always been) part of our responsibilities as teachers. Our students should know how we assess their learning in both subjective and objective ways. Yellow and blue will always make some version of green. That is an easy question to answer on a multiple-choice test. But describing how that green created unity in an artwork is not always a matter of bubbling in a letter on a Scantron sheet. Yet, each teacher tried to articulate her beliefs about caring to reach a definition.

Eleanor gave many examples when she defined caring. To her, caring “is just learning to love and to appreciate each other and to have mutual respect, so it’s a combination. But, you know, I need my students to feel all of that.” I appreciated how she believed her students should “feel” caring. It is not just a heart/head entity, but rather

something we somatically experience, something that we experience within an environment with our entire beings. Eleanor described her classroom environment while discussing her personal definition of caring. Like most art rooms, she has posters of class rules, artworks, and vocabulary. She also has the IB learner profiles and attitudes prominently displayed, as well as inspirational posters that invite students to the art room, encourage hard work, and respect for others. This is part of a somatic experience of caring: to see, feel, and move through an environment that promotes artistic creation and respect for everyone. Eisner (2009) saw somatic experience as “body knowledge...The body knows and forms the basis for intuition.” (p. 9). Eleanor’s intention has been to create “a caring environment” where students can be “happy and sensitive” to others’ needs. She is encouraging an intuitive sense of caring. Eleanor described examples where students would move to help each other or hug a fellow classmate who needed support:

I love it when they are, especially the younger children that get up and—even though they are supposed to stay in their seats—but when [a caring act] happens...I know what they’re doing, I make it a point to thank them and let them know that the world is a better place if we all had caring attitudes.

She continued:

I love it when the empathy just pours out and it’s real, it’s genuine, and I really love it if it happens when they’re older, because they tend to lose it. I try to keep that going and show or highlight examples when I see that that’s happening or in situations when I know it can be a teachable moment...But I was going to point to my posters...I used this the other day. I like to let all of the students know with visuals and I do make a point to make sure that they’re seeing the posters...This is one of my favorites [pointing to a poster that says, “Welcome,” in several languages] and I do like to just let them know that they are welcome here.

Later Eleanor told me, “I mean honestly as parents, you know, I think you just automatically kind of mirror who you are and children pick up on that.” This connects to

Noddings' (2002) ideas of caring starting with relationships at home, where how a teacher treats her family could reflect how she might treat her students. Her past experiences, her faith, her family, all inform how Eleanor described caring and led her to create a caring environment where her students could feel that love and care. To her, caring involves empathy, appreciation, creating respect, and feeling love.

I forgot to ask Ghila for her definition of caring during our interviews. I attribute this to trying to fit every question into two interviews instead of the three interviews Yael and Eleanor had. After I transcribed her interviews, I asked her to write a definition for caring and this was her response:

Caring as it relates to my students is the idea that my students are my concern and that I need to be aware of who they are, where they come from and what makes them tick. With this information, I can be involved in their well-beings, success in school and their overall ability to function as well adjusted students with a purpose and concern for others too. Caring is a two-way relationship. When I am a caring teacher, then it is my hope that my students will emulate this behavior. Caring is the feeling that in a classroom, students are kind to one another, thoughtful and genuinely care about each other and the art that they make.

Like Eleanor's statements about caring, Ghila's definition relied upon context. Where Eleanor acknowledged caring in the context of teachable moments, Ghila described the importance of really getting to know her students and their backgrounds. As a result of that effort, she hoped that students would emulate this care with her and each other.

Ghila did not discuss maintaining caring through reciprocity, but I think her desire for her students to emulate care is a way they can reciprocate caring to her. Noddings' (2003) idea of reciprocity could apply to Ghila's statement of, "caring is a two-way relationship" as well. Ghila was the only participant who made reference to caring about artistic creation, which goes back to attending to one's work and paying attention to the feelings

of others. To Ghila, caring involves relationship, concern, and involvement with students to help them become thoughtful, caring artists.

Yael believed caring was “something I just do.” She elaborated on this much later, when I contacted her and asked if she wanted to write a definition. I knew how difficult defining caring could be, so I had hoped writing about it might be easier than talking about it. Yael told me another story. While she did not give me a definition, I appreciated the story. Recently, she was trying to get home during a minor snowstorm, which turned into a massive traffic mess. Her normal drive home usually took thirty minutes. On this day it took ten hours and a neighbor with a four-wheel drive vehicle to get her home:

On my way home that day, as I was trapped in traffic, a bus from the middle school stopped on the other side of my car. Hands appeared in the window and children began to yell, “Look! It’s Ms. Y! Hey!” I am remembered with fondness. That is a powerful symbol of caring. Every morning at carpool children run up to me [and say] “I love you Ms. Y.” What more can you ask for?

Yael brings to mind Goldstein's (1997) research on love and teaching elementary students. Goldstein has cited an ethic of care and feminist theory in her study of how teacherly love differs from other forms of love, specifically motherly love. She stated a teacher’s love for her students is “more limited in scope, duration, and intensity” when compared to a mother’s love for her child (p. 152). For an elementary art teacher, that time is incredibly limited, due to the nature of the elementary school schedule. Yet, the memory of that love, as Yael’s story illustrates, is a powerful reminder of how caring teachers can impact students’ lives for years after they leave the art room. The feeling of love and fondness between herself and her students defines caring for Yael.

Connecting back to my personal definition of caring, I stated caring is both thinking and feeling (Goldstein, 1998a). All three teachers mentioned feeling in their descriptions of caring in their classrooms. By feeling care, students can care for themselves, other people, and the artwork they create. While none of my participants specifically discussed how thinking about care related to their definitions of caring, they all discussed how they thought about caring. Eleanor thought mutual respect went with caring. Ghila discussed how concerned awareness of her students' lives related to caring. Yael talked about memory's role in caring. All of these women thought about how caring happened in their classrooms and gave descriptions about caring in practice. Implied in each definition is the importance of relationship. Whether "learning to love and appreciate each other" (Eleanor), or being "kind to one another, thoughtful, and genuinely care about each other" (Ghila), or being "remembered with fondness" (Yael), each teacher saw caring as something that could not happen without a relationship. All three teachers value and practice caring in their teaching, which ties to Held's (2006) beliefs about caring. Through the value and practice of care, these teachers have shown attentiveness and thoughtfulness to their students and their works of art. They encourage their students to play, use their imaginations, and connect with their communities, their cultures, and their histories.

As I stated earlier, I would rather describe caring than define it. Yet I feel through my interactions with my participants that I have moved towards a definition of caring in art education that includes the following qualities. All of my participants wanted to foster success in their students. They encouraged artistic growth and adapted to the individual needs of students. They provided ways for students to have personal



experiences with artwork through field trips and highlighted artists who related to students' cultural backgrounds. They exhibited their students' work in prominent spaces. They offered structure and security, but also encouraged creativity and individuality in students' artistic expressions. They extensively researched artists and exposed students to a diverse range of tools and media. They participated in extracurricular activities, like the Spiral Saturday Group.

While these qualities describe many art teachers, this group of educators exhibited dispositions I felt characterized them as caring individuals. Each woman saw art education as her calling. Perhaps their lives before teaching informed this belief. None of these women found fulfillment in their previous professions. When they became art teachers, they found not only greater purpose, but joy. They demonstrated perseverance, curiosity, and a love for learning. They sustained their professional communities and volunteered their skills in their school systems and other local organizations. They loved making and discovering, and they wanted to nurture that creative spirit within their students. Among these caring practices, creating art with students was the most important thing they did. Through the creation and appreciation of art, they showed how caring relationships could allow children “to call, to say, to sing, and—using their imaginations, tapping their courage—to transform” (Greene, 1995, p. 198).

**Research Question 4: In what ways does the creation and appreciation of art contribute to a caring atmosphere? If art does not contribute to a caring atmosphere, how does the art teacher explain that?**

To every participant, creating and appreciating art played a role in creating caring. Each woman described artists and artworks that appealed to their students. Yael

discussed Benito Archuleta, but also connected to the artists her students saw on their free field trips, such as Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. Eleanor loved Romare Bearden and based her first Night of the Arts show on the Harlem Renaissance. Ghila's entire curriculum is built on artists. Her classes studied Peter Max, Faith Ringgold, Friedensreich Hundertwasser, and George Rodrigue, to just name a few. I believe the diversity of artists demonstrated a desire to connect to students, for them to see that artists can be of different races, from different places, have different ideas. Not that Ghila, Eleanor, and Yael abandoned the 'classic' artists, like Van Gogh and the Impressionists. They just recognized the need to care about their students' cultures and connect to artists who could relate to them.

Creating caring environments where students could feel free to be creative was also important to these teachers. I think Ghila described it best:

Well, I think when children are making art, they can be more open with you than when you just sit there and look at them directly and ask them a question...When you're playing along side a child, you're much more likely to be able to get to know the child on a deeper level because they're more willing to talk if they are enmeshed in what they're doing, because it's not as threatening. It's more trusting, so the act of making art creates an environment for talking to kids.

Ghila saw how an artistic environment could have the possibility to create a safe environment for children to explore and share and create. By making the art room an open space, children can work through creative problems without fear of criticism. My participants tried to achieve "a sense of wonder, a sense of openness, a sense of curiosity" that Maxine Greene spoke of when she described her ideal classroom (Day Hutton, 2005). If we want to encourage our students' artistic abilities, we have to care for their senses, as well as their desires to dream and play.

Yael also discussed the possibilities of play. She has noticed how her students are rushed through their learning, pushed to understand “this concept...got to have this concept, you’ve got to be able to do this, you’ve got to be able to do that.” As a result, “there is no real play, real time just to play.” As Vygotsky’s (1986) research pointed out repeatedly, play is essential in learning and understanding the world. Whitebread, Coltman, Jameson, & Lander (2009) focused on the importance of play in Vygotsky’s theories: “Vygotsky argued that play makes a crucial contribution to the development of symbolic representation. Human thought, culture, and communication, he argued, are all founded on the unique human aptitude for using various forms of symbolic representation, which includes drawing and other forms of visual art” (pp. 43-44). Play also prepares children tackle creative problems and spark imaginative solutions (Lindqvist, 2003; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009; Vygotsky, 2004; Whitebread et al., 2009). When students are forced to rapidly move from concept to concept, without really exploring relationships and playing with possibilities, it is hard for them to reach a depth of knowledge that schooling now requires of them. Yael believed the arts still allowed for play and by encouraging play, she felt she was encouraging a caring environment:

It’s very important. Just the element of play itself is very important and I don’t think that they get enough of it. They don’t get enough of just...I mean, I do believe that sometimes, if I handed them three pieces of paper and say: “Free draw,” every single time that they came in, they would be delighted, that 90% of them would be totally happy and delighted. Because they are so, so just pushed down in a regular classroom.

This connects with Ghila’s idea of art as therapy. Play can be a way to resist the structures of learning in other subjects. Even though Ghila and Yael did not discuss the idea of freedom as a part of caring, it is apparent in all of our discussions that both felt the need to give students freedom from the constricting nature of schooling. As Vygotsky

(2004) reminds us, “When we attempt to foster children’s creativity, including in visual arts, we need to observe the principle of freedom, which is generally an essential condition for all kinds of creativity” (p. 84). I connect this to Greene’s (1995) pleas for participation in the arts, which allow “us to *see* more in our experience, to *hear* more on normally unheard frequencies, to *become conscious* of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and convention have oppressed” (p. 123). In the previous chapter, I spoke of the spiritual nature of teaching art by describing how Eleanor, Yael, and Ghila all strive for teaching more than basic skills and art history. By teaching for a greater purpose, they are opening avenues for students to discover and see more in their experiences.

While basic skills and art history might not help students transcend their everyday experiences, teaching techniques and instilling strong foundational skills in different media are important ways art teachers show caring. Going back to my construction metaphor from my theoretical framework, a house cannot be built without a strong base. Ghila’s first lesson to her students was a basic observational drawing of a shoe, but that simple assignment was a revelation to her. When I asked her what was the most exciting part of her first stint as a substitute art teacher, Ghila replied:

I think the excitement of the students’ enthusiasm. That yes, they could draw and they could draw their shoes. They took their shoes off and put them on the table. The excitement of that ‘Ah ha’ moment, that the students loved it, and I loved that experience of their understanding. It was just so different from anything that they had done before. And at that point I realized how important it is to have a strong drawing program as part of your curriculum.

Drawing a shoe is a lesson all art teachers have probably taught at some point in their careers, but I doubt few have felt as attached to that lesson as Ghila has. She has continued to teach observational shoe drawings to her fourth grader students every year, using a few drawings in a t-shirt design for her school’s annual fun run. The drawings

have now become art history lessons as well, going beyond the basic contour lines of an observational drawing to incorporate a famous artwork chosen by the students. The shoes can also be seen as symbols of her journey to be an art teacher. By teaching her students how to do observational drawings of their shoes, Ghila was building a base where her student could continue to grow in confidence. Giving students a strong foundation in drawing is a way Ghila cared for her students.

Eleanor thought skills were important as well. In previous years, her school system's art assessments required students to have knowledge of color theory. Even though color was not a theme of her art show that year, Eleanor incorporated it in:

I had to make changes, as the assessments were really an important part of curriculum...I needed to focus on color and make sure they understood that. I ended up revising the theme. The theme ended up being "Color Our World." What I did was, incorporate the idea of learning about specific countries...making connections to how other cultures live in the world, and then also learning about color theory. So we had two different projects that reflected those two things.

Eleanor could have just taught to the test and given her students boring color theory exercises. But instead of letting the test dictate her curriculum, she incorporated important skills and taught lessons that expanded her students' knowledge of other cultures, and fitting a major theme of her IB school.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Despite the many themes I explored in this research, I have many more that could be expanded into future studies. The following themes and ideas draw from questions I wish I had asked of my participants during our interviews. Three interviews (or two in Ghila's case) are really not enough time to really go in depth into the nature of caring, even though I had a wealth of data. I hope I have planted a little seed in each participant to further explore the nature of caring in her classroom. It would be wonderful to come

back after a few years and see if our discussions have impacted beliefs about caring. I also would like to observe their pedagogy in practice. Classroom observations could have added another rich layer of data. Would I be able to get more stories about student interactions? Would each teacher start seeing more ways caring occurs in her classroom?

### **Diversity**

If I wanted to continue expanding on the idea of feminist pedagogy, teaching to empower all of my students would be the next logical step. Diversity was not a theme that I pursued in part, because my participants did not bring it often and in part, because I did not know how to talk about it. I found myself wondering, as Choi (2008) did: “Why is it so difficult to *talk*—not shout or whisper—about race and racial issues in academic settings” (p.53)? Eleanor, Yael, and I teach at schools with large minority populations. Ghila’s school has students from many nationalities. All teachers mentioned they enjoyed teaching students different from themselves, but they did not elaborate beyond that initial statement. They all made conscious efforts to connect to students’ cultures and backgrounds by choosing a diverse range of artists. None of my participants talked about treating students differently because of race, culture, or socio-economic status, except when Yael and Eleanor mentioned one of the reasons they planned field trips to the art museum was because they worked in Title I schools and their students would not get to go to the museum otherwise. This is understandable. It is a reason I often cite myself when taking my students on art field trips. It is a reason I do many things for my students, which brings me back to James (2012) study on mothering and deficit caring. I wonder why we feel compelled to care because of what our students do not have. I also wonder why I did not feel the need to ask further questions about the role of diversity.

As I stated in the literature review, One of the criticisms of feminist literature is that it has traditionally ignored the voices of minorities and women on the lower end of the economic spectrum (Choi, 2008; Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Garza, 2009; Gonzalez & Ayala-Alcantar, 2008; Patterson et al., 2008; Roberts, 2010; Thompson, 2003; Tronto, 1987). One possible way for the ethic of care to become more relevant to the experience of minorities, specifically African Americans, is a womanist pedagogy (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). Womanist pedagogy has three core characteristics (Patterson et al., 2008). The first is the importance of mothering, but it is the shared responsibility of the entire community, not just individuals. The second is a sense of justice and political clarity. The third requires an ethic of risk. An ethic of risk “requires a commitment to overturn the very power relations that White caring reproduces (Patterson et al., 2008, p. 100). Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002) found womanist teaching more powerful than an ethic of care because:

[Womanist] teachers see themselves as dynamic agents for social justice precisely because they define themselves as having a sense of connection with and responsibility to the human struggle for freedom and justice. In other words, the hopefulness of the ethic of risk keeps people from falling into the numbness and self-absorption of despair. (p. 84)

A womanist ethic of care truly embraces one of feminism’s main tenets, that marginalized voices need to be represented and empowered. As a teacher who wants to provide more opportunities for empowerment to her students from many different races and cultures, finding more research about diversity in caring is essential to my development into a more caring educator.

## **Advocacy**

Only Ghila mentioned advocacy as an important factor in her classroom. Since she was the only teacher who was paid by a foundation for many years, advocacy was critical for the survival of her art program. Eleanor mentioned her desire to be an advocate for children as a reason why she became an art teacher. While she did not specifically describe her art shows as ways to advocate for her a program, but her art shows do educate her school and community about the value of the arts. Yael rarely discussed how her school supported her art program. She did not mention advocacy in any interview. With the pressure of assessment and changes in her system's fine arts administration, she felt adrift at times and not very optimistic about future of art in schools. I worried about her, in part because of her health, but also because I was afraid she did not feel as much support as she needed from her own school. Caring for students does not require fighting for the arts in a public arena. Some art teachers are quiet leaders who support their cause in more subtle ways. But if we believe a strong arts program is a necessary part of a caring education, we have to care enough to advocate for it, both on the local school level and in the greater community.

## **IB Schools as More Caring Places?**

Many studies have been conducted about learning in an International Baccalaureate (IB) school. There have been studies about teacher support of IB (Twigg, 2010), different approaches to implementation (Stillisano, Waxman, Hostrup, & Rollins, 2011), and adolescent attitudes towards IB programs (Foust, Hertberg-Davis, & Callahan, 2009; O'Boyle, 2009; Shaunessy, Suldo, Hardesty, & Shaffer, 2006). There are articles promoting IB programs (Hill, 2012) and other articles denouncing IB attitudes and



learner profiles as “too rigidly Western humanist in origin” (van Oord, 2013, p. 214). However, I could not find any study claiming that IB programs increased caring behaviors in elementary schools. My own research found mixed results. Eleanor was very supportive of her school’s IB program and aligned with it more closely than Yael and Ghila did with their programs. I believe Eleanor’s support of IB program both inside her art room and with her mentoring of fifth grade students helped her become a more essential part of the school. She was honored as a Teacher of the Year and was nominated for her recent educational award by a fifth grade teacher at her school. Her fellow teachers appreciate her hard work and leadership, as well as her caring demeanor and passion for teaching art.

Ghila’s unique position at her school, as a teacher who was once funded by parent support and learned almost everything through on-the-job experience, made it hard for me to judge whether the IB program at her school impacted her program as much. Her program’s success and the support it garnered from other teachers and the community seemed more due to her work advocating for her art program, rather than her support of the IB program.

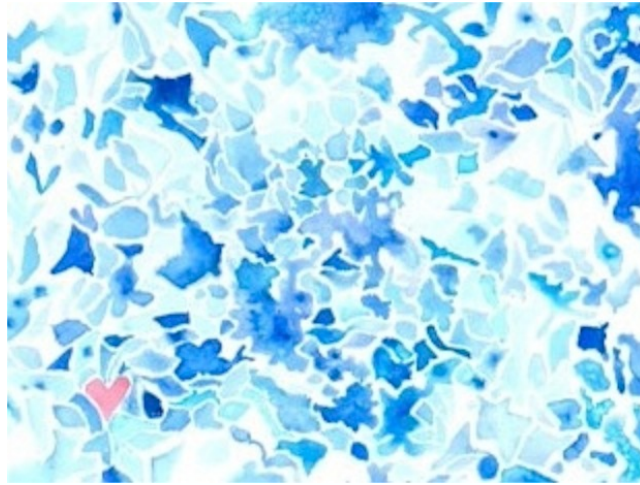
As mentioned earlier, Yael wanted to support the IB program more at her school, but her IB coordinators have not figured out how to include the specials teachers’ into the school’s plan. Yael believed “one of the problems with the IB program itself, is that they haven’t figured out what to do with us...in a regular school setting.” While Yael believed the IB program was nice in theory, but the way it was practiced at her school left room for improvement. To her, it seemed like the IB program was better suited for private school that did not have to deal with the stresses of constant testing. There were

hopes with a new IB coordinator that the situation would change at Yael's school, but so far there has not been much progress.

As with most educational initiatives like IB, it seems some schools do a better job of implementation than others. In the specific cases of these three art teachers, it appeared the more a school supported the IB program in all subjects, the more the art teacher felt sustained, but it remains for further study to see if a strong IB program means more caring students.

### **What was Learned?**

I knew going into this study I would not come out with a clear definition of caring from every participant. I knew I would not find themes that I could apply to every caring art teacher. I knew it would not be an easy journey. However, in my eight brief interviews with these three art teachers, I have discovered more about my own caring practices. I realized I have a spiritual belief about what I do. I have always believed art education was essential learning for every child, but after examining the caring practices of my participants, I feel even more strongly about supporting the arts as a way to care for children. None of these women teach art because it is easy or fun. It has moments of joy, but it is incredibly hard work. It is so hard that sometimes teaching art keeps teachers from making art. When that realization hit me, especially in my conversations with Yael, I really had to pause.



*Figure 13. Culture of caring*

I did have opportunities to make art during my years of graduate study. Many semesters ago, I took an independent study where I attempted to describe how caring, thought, culture, and creating were intertwined. I read a few books and wrote a few papers. I also created drawings, paintings, and prints to explain these complex subjects. One artwork was figure 13, a watercolor painting. It was based on a photograph of HeLa cells. Around the same time, my book club read *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, a book about an African American woman who died of cancer, but her cells continue to live on and have been used in polio vaccine development, cloning, and numerous other research trials. I was fascinated by the idea of “immortal” cells. What if a culture of caring could perpetuate in the same way as a cell culture? Could caring continue to grow both inside and beyond of a classroom? What would that look like?

I chose watercolors because of their amorphous nature, which I thought would capture the shape and quality of the cells. I debated whether to add the heart in a contrasting color. It seemed a little cliché. Surely in all of this reading and writing and

thinking, I could find a better symbol for caring. I now think this may have foreshadowed by struggle with defining caring. But I liked the composition and how the heart worked with the rest of the painting, so I left it alone. I learned much from my artistic creations during that study. Perhaps my watercolor painting of a caring culture may be more representative of my thoughts and feelings about the importance of caring in art education more than my words. As Eisner (2002) reminded me, “knowledge is less a discovery than it is a construction” (p. 211). If the research process has taught me anything, it is through the process construction, and in my case, reconstruction and revision, where insight can appear. Even now, I do not believe I have reached the end of my research, but simply a brief pause on a continuing journey where, to quote Eisner (2009) again, “the limits of language in no way define the limits of cognition” (p. 8). I have learned so much more than I can possibly say.

I have not had many opportunities after my independent study to create art to explain my thinking. Recently, I walked down stairs to my art studio in my home and found there were cobwebs, just as Yael described in her house. But like Yael, I know that someday, hopefully in the not too distant future, those tools and media that gave me such happiness in the past will be used again in the future. I believe those art teachers who find a way to practice their art, no matter how short the time they can dedicate to it, reconnect to that love and in turn, can better share that love of art with their students.

Another lesson about caring came from Ghila, “you have to be pretty strict to create a caring environment.” As I discussed earlier, curriculum and classroom management are important in caring art rooms. Strictness does not mean degrading a child’s work or cracking down on difference, but rather a sense of structure. This

structure can be found in routines, which encourage shared responsibility of place and the people within that place (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). As Bae (2004) explained in her observations on how art teachers organized their instructional time, “true freedom occurs when children are provided with the opportunity to make choices within a structure that is stable, reliable, and protected from distraction” (p. 249). Providing that safe, stable structure is a hallmark of a caring educator. This can also be found in setting high expectations for student work.

Stephen Spender said, “Memory is not exactly memory, but an experience lived through again and again” (John-Steiner, 1997, p. 69). The temporal aspect of caring was probably the most interesting revelation to me. I do not think I am a more caring teacher now than when I started teaching fifteen years ago. I am just more aware of the possibilities of care that can happen everyday. I believe since I have learned more about qualitative research methods, especially narrative methods of research, I can see the great value in stories as teaching tools. Yet, time is needed to find and refine those stories. It is rare to instantly know that something amazing happened in your classroom. But amazing things have happened in many classrooms, and teachers could benefit from recording those stories and sharing them with others. I feel research is very good at giving us statistical reasons for why we should implement certain educational practices and policies, but rarely does research allow for teachers to tell stories about how these practices and policies impact themselves and their students every day. We need to start speaking up. We need to tell our stories of care if we want to make our schools more caring places.

## EPILOGUE



Figure 14. Empty bowls

*We shall not cease from exploring  
And at the end of our exploration  
We will return to where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

TS Eliot, *Little Gidding*

*I ended my master's thesis with a story about planning my first Empty Bowls dinner, which was ten years ago. It started as a soup dinner and eventually it changed into an ice cream social. Not surprisingly, my students like ice cream more than soup, so we raised more money. Eventually, we combined Empty Bowls with our school's art show. It was much easier for me to plan one huge event rather than two huge events each spring. I did not change the format when I moved to my new school. I was in my*

*second year of my doctoral program at the time. If Empty Bowls was working, why change things?*

*The origami cranes episode reminded me that I could not force my students to care, nor could I impose my ideas of what service-learning should be. If I wanted to continue Empty Bowls, I had to make time for the educational part of it. What had once been a joy to plan became a burden. I only had time for my older students to make bowls. Despite my lack of enthusiasm, my students actually enjoyed making bowls because they had to share the production. Two fifth grade students made one bowl and then two fourth grade students worked together to glaze it. The quality of their bowls improved greatly. My students no longer rushed to be the first one done. Now they held each other to higher standards and could help each other if there was a problem. I finally figured out a way to make the bowls a collaborative process, but I still could not figure out a way to get my younger students involved. Honestly, I was tired of Empty Bowls, but how could I admit I was tired of helping hungry families?*

*I realized I needed to return to the beginning. If I wanted all grades to participate, I needed to go back to a separate soup dinner, where the younger students could make decorations. I mentioned this idea to other art teachers in my area. Some of them asked if their students could make some bowls too. We received donations of clay and are in the process of finding money for soup ingredients. Even though planning a big event right around the time I finish this dissertation is not greatest idea, it has reenergized my commitment to Empty Bowls. The other art teachers are excited to help out. I am reminded that any creative or caring endeavor cannot thrive in isolation. We cannot thrive isolation. We need each other to become better versions of ourselves.*

*Caring requires relationship and relationships cannot thrive in isolation. So I am returning to the way I started doing Empty Bowls ten years ago, hoping to regain that sense of joy, to know that place for the first time.*



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